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Bishnoi gang claims Baba Siddique's murder

Meanwhile, 2 of the 3 accused are remanded till 12 October

MUMBAI, 13 OCT

The Lawrence Bishnoi gang has taken responsibility for the murder of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, while also issuing a threat against anyone supporting Bollywood actor Salman Khan. This claim surfaced following a Facebook post by Shibu Lonkar, a known associate of the Bishnoi gang. In the post, Lonkar alleged that Siddique was targeted due to his alleged connections with underworld figure Dawood Ibrahim, his close ties to Salman Khan, and the death of Anuj Thapan, a suspect previously arrested in the shooting incident outside Khan's residence. According to Indian Express, Mumbai police confirmed the gang's alleged claims.

28-year-old Pravin Lonkar, brother of Shubham, has been apprehended in Pune.

Two suspects arrested, one on the run

On Sunday, a court in Mumbai remanded two of the accused, Gurmail Baljit Singh, 23, a resident of Haryana, and an alleged minor from Uttar Pradesh, until 12 October. Singh had previously been jailed in Kaithal, Haryana, for the murder of a youth in 2019.

Zeeshan Siddiqui and Arshia Siddique, son and daughter of NCP leader Baba Siddique, during his funeral procession, in Bandra, Mumbai on Sunday PHOTO: ANI

The third accused, identified as Shiv Kumar from Uttar Pradesh, remains at large.

Police were directed to produce the second accused again after conducting the test. The court will then decide if proceedings against him will be conducted at a juvenile court or the regular court.

The crime branch, probing the case, sought the remand of the accused duo for 14 days, saying they needed to investigate if there was any international link involved.

According to the police, the accused were in Mumbai for some time and were keeping a close eye on Siddiqui.

The police also mentioned that the accused had done recce of Baba Siddiqui's house and office premises and were in Mumbai for one and a half to two months and were keeping an eye on him.

The crime branch is trying to identify the location where the assailants had stayed after arriving in Mumbai and who helped them.

Siddique died prior to hospitalisation: Doctors

A doctor from the Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai, where Siddique was taken after he was shot at, has said that he probably died before being shifted to the medical facility.

Siddique was unconscious when he was brought to the Lilavati Hospital on Saturday night after being shot at. Doctors tried for almost two hours to save him, but in vain, he said.

Six rounds fired, three hit Siddique

Mumbai Crime Branch said that a total of six round of bullets were fired at Siddique, out of which three hit him. The crime branch also mentioned that the third accused has been identified and will be arrested soon. Meanwhile, Siddique was cremated with full state honours on Sunday.

—Agencies

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AMID MUDA SCAM

Kharge's son Rahul withdraws request for civic amenity site

BENGALURU, 13 OCT

The chairperson of Siddhartha Vihar Trust and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's son Rahul M Kharge, has withdrawn his request for the allotment of five acres of civic amenity site in Bengaluru to set up a 'Multi-Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and Research Centre'.

The move comes close on the heels of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi returning the 14 sites to Mysuru Urban Development Authority after the Lokayukta police registered a case against Siddaramaiah, his wife and brother-in-law.

The BJP IT department in charge Amit Malviya in a social media post questioned the allotment of the site and called it 'misuse of power, nepotism, and conflict of interest'.

Kharge's younger son Priyank Kharge, who is a minister in the State government, shared the information with the scanned copies of the letter on X.

In a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of the Karnataka Industrial Development Board (KIADB) on 20 September, Rahul wrote, "Withdrawal of our request for Civic Amenity site to set up Multi Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and a Research Centre."

> **I feel vindicated. The Kharge family has returned the 5-acre KIADB land illegally allotted to them. When I had raised this issue, I was threatened and abused by Kharge Jr. and his cronies. Truth has prevailed. After all, this may be a tactical move to seek the CM's chair**
>
> Lahar Singh Siroya, BJP MP

He said the objective of the Siddhartha Vihar Trust was to create more employable opportunities through skill development in emerging technologies for students and unemployed youth. "The proposed Muiti-Skill Deveiopment Centre aimed primarily to serve youngsters to make them more employable and industry ready with skills and future skills. It was also designed to help students who were unable to pursue college education," Rahul said.

The Trust preferred a site within the KIADB industrial area because of its proximity to high-growth industries as it would provide opportunities for young people, he said.

"Siddhartha Vihar Trust is a public educational, cultural, and charitable trust and not a private or family-run trust. All institutions established under its aegis are 'Not for Profit'," he explained. *—PTI*

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Docs' stir: FAIMA calls for shutdown of elective services

KOLKATA, 13 OCT

The Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), a body representing Resident Doctors' Associations (RDAs) across India, on Sunday called for a nationwide shutdown of elective services in hospitals from Monday in solidarity with medics' ongoing protest in West Bengal. The decision was taken after a meeting of FAIMA on Saturday. The body, however, requested all RDAs to ensure that emergency services remain functional 24/7, he said. FAIMA said it stands in full solidarity with the junior doctors of West Bengal. An open letter was addressed to National Medical Associations, state Resident Doctors' Associations and Resident Doctors' Associations. *—PTI*

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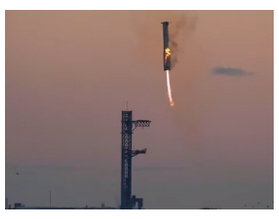

PHOTO: X

SpaceX launches its ambitious Starship rocket

BOCA CHICA, 13 OCT

SpaceX launched its enormous Starship rocket on Sunday on its boldest test flight yet, striving to catch the returning booster back at the pad with mechanical arms. Towering almost 400 feet, the empty Starship blasted off at sunrise from the southern tip of Texas near the Mexican border. It arced over the Gulf of Mexico like the four Starships before it that ended up being destroyed, either soon after liftoff or while ditching into the sea. The last one in June was the most successful yet, completing its flight without exploding. This time, SpaceX founder and CEO Elon Musk upped the challenge and risk. It aimed to bring the first-stage booster back to land at the pad from which it had soared minutes earlier. The launch tower sported monstrous metal arms, dubbed chopsticks, ready to catch the descending 71m booster. It was up to the flight director to decide, real time with a manual control, whether to attempt the landing. SpaceX said both the booster and launch tower had to be in good, stable condition. Otherwise, it was going to end up in the gulf like the previous ones. *—PTI*

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Iran warns US forces against operating in Israel

JERUSALEM, 13 OCT

- Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu has accused UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon of serving as "human shields" for Hezbollah after Israeli strikes wounded five of them

Iran on Sunday warned the US to keep its military forces out of Israel.

The comments came in a post on the social platform X and referred to the possibility that the US might send one of its Terminal High Altitude Area Defense systems to Israel. A move of the complex system, known by the acronym THAAD, to Israel would involve the deployment of soldiers to operate it. Israel has been escalating its campaign against Hezbollah with waves of heavy airstrikes across Lebanon and a ground invasion at the border after a year of exchanges of fire. Israel is now at war with Hamas in Gaza and Hamas' ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not say how many were fighters but say women and children make up more than half of the fatalities. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90 per cent of its population of 2.3 million people. It's been a year since Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed into army bases and farming communities, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians. They are still holding about 100 captives inside Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon of serving as "human shields" for Hezbollah after Israeli strikes wounded five of them in recent days. Israel has warned them to evacuate southern Lebanon as it carries out air and ground operations against Hezbollah militants, but the peacekeepers refused.Netanyahu said that their refusal to clear out "has the effect of providing Hezbollah terrorists with human shields," saying they had become "hostages of Hezbollah". *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

'GatiShakti' aimed at revolutionising infra, says Modi

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) has emerged as a transformative initiative aimed at revolutionising India's infrastructure and is driving faster and more efficient development across sectors.

He also made a surprise visit to the PM GatiShakti Anubhuti Kendra at Bharat Mandapam here on the third anniversary of PMGS-NMP.

The Anubhuti Kendra showcases the key features, achievements and milestones of PMGS-NMP and was launched on 13 October, 2021, to provide multi-modal connectivity infrastructure to various economic zones. PM GatiShakti is a transformative approach for economic growth and sustainable development driven by seven engines -- railway, roads, ports, waterways, airports, mass transport and logistics infrastructure.

The seamless integration of various stakeholders has led to boosting logistics, reducing delays and creating new opportunities for several people, he said. *—PTI*

FESTIVITIES END

Devotees immerse an idol of Goddess Durga on the last day of Vijayadashami at Ulsoor Lake in Bengaluru on Sunday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

SEEKS BBMP'S RESPONSE

NGT issues notice on blockage of City drains, lake encroachments

According to the report, the lake's water level was alarmingly low, even during the rainy season PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

The National Green Tribunal (NGT has sought a response from the Chief Commissioner of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and other officials on a Lokayukta report on two lakes of Bengaluru that found blocked stormwater drains and encroachments as major issues. The NGT was hearing a matter where it had taken suo motu cognisance of a newspaper report regarding the Lokayukta's probe that found several issues in Vibhutipura and Doddanekundi lakes in Bengaluru.

In a recent order, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said, "The news item states that in Vibhutipura Lake, officials found the entrance gate mutilated, fencing destroyed, and illegal structures within the premises."

"The lake's water level was alarmingly low, even during the rainy season, due to a blocked outflow path. Encroachments and misuse of facilities were also noted. Furthermore, it was found that the Doddanekundi Lake faced similar issues," he said.

The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member A Senthil Vel said, "The news item raises substantial issues relating to compliance of the provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, and Environment (Protection) Act." BBMP Chief Commissioner, Chairman of Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board, member secretaries of Karnataka State Pollution Control Board and Central Pollution Control Board and Bengaluru's District Magistrate (DM) have been impleaded as respondents and parties by the green body. The tribunal noted that the DM's counsel accepted the notice and sought time to file reply. "Let notice be issued to other respondents for filing their response/reply by way of affidavit before the southern zonal bench of the tribunal in Chennai at least one week before the next date of hearing (on 5 November)," said the tribunal. *—PTI*

- NGT was hearing a matter where it had taken suo motu cognisance of a report on the Lokayukta's probe that found issues in Vibhutipura and Doddanekundi lakes

Channapatna bypoll: DKS to contest as proxy candidate

This is the first time he said no one from his family will contest

MYSURU, 13 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday said that he will project himself as Congress candidate for Channapatna Assembly bypolls on Sunday. However, he said no one from his family is contesting in this election.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "Even though the party has secured less per cent of votes in the recent Lok Sabha elections and in last Assembly elections in Channapatna constituency, his party has made all preparations to put up a strong fight against JDS- BJP candidates."

"The party will seek votes on the basis of the development works it initiated in the constituency. I hope the people will favour Congress candidates. Whoever the Opposition fields, my party is not bothered about it. My priority is to keep our house in order, he added.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar criticised BJP-JD(S) leaders day dreaming of change of guard in the State PHOTO: PTI

He also criticised BJP-JD(S) leaders day dreaming of change of guard in the State, demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, but they will not be successful in their endeavour, Congress will remain in power for another 10 years, he asserted. Shivakumar refused to comment on the change of Siddaramaiah in the State.

Earlier, Shivakumar said that the vote cast to Congress would be a vote for him, no matter who contests the by-election from Congress party. When asked about the alliance between BJP and JD(S) for the by-poll, he said, "It doesn't matter who joins hands. We are serving the people and they will make the right decision."

Meanwhile, on Saturday, Union Minister and JD(S) State president HD Kumaraswamy had convened a meeting with local workers and leaders at Kethaganahalli near Bidadi and said there is pressure from workers and leaders for JD(S) youth wing president and his son, Nikhil Kumaraswamy, to contest.

Reiterating that Channapatna is a stronghold of the JD(S), having won in the last two elections, Kumaraswamy acknowledged that the party had faced some organisational issues but reiterated that their dedicated workers would ensure a successful campaign.

When asked about Shivakumar's frequent visits to Channapatna, Kumaraswamy remarked, "No matter how many times he visits, it has no impact."

—Salar News with agencies

BJP MPs betrayed people of the State, says CM

MYSURU, 13 OCT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday hit out at State BJP MPs for not raising their voice against the injustice to the State in tax devolution.

Addressing reporters, Siddaramaiah said the State has received Rs 6,498 crore while Uttar Pradesh got Rs 31,987 crore, marking a huge difference in the tax devolution between the two states.

"People need to raise their voice against the injustice to Karnataka. BJP leaders supporting the Centre are betraying the people of the state, be it Pralhad Joshi or anyone else," he said.

"So many MPs have gone from Karnataka. They need to raise their voice, which they have not done."

According to him, the State has incurred a loss of Rs 60,000 crore in tax devolution in five years.

Asked about the next move of the government on this, Siddaramaiah said he would discuss it with his cabinet colleagues.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah PHOTO: PTI

He further said that his government is planning to hold agitation against the Centre for discrimination against states.

"Uttar Pradesh, infamous for its poor governance, has been allocated Rs 31,962 crore; Bihar, Rs 17,921 crore; Madhya Pradesh, Rs 13,987 crore; and Rajasthan, Rs 10,737 crore. Why should the sweat and toil of Karnataka fuel the growth of states that have lagged behind due to maladministration?", he said.

On the cabinet's decision to grant clemency to Hubballi rioters belonging to minority community, Siddaramaiah said several RSS leaders were also released when BJP was in power. The case is in regard with the attack on policemen with stones on 16 April, 2022 in Hubballi town.

This is one of the 43 cases the State Cabinet decided to withdraw at its meeting on Thursday following a petition by the Anjuman-e-Islam to the Home Minister G Parameshwara, official sources said. *—Salar News with Agencies*

Mysuru matriarch slams officials over delay in procession

MYSURU, 13 OCT

Pramoda Devi Wadiyar, the matriarch of the Mysuru royal family, blamed officials for the 45-minute delay in the Dasara procession. She clarified that the golden 'howdah' was handed over to the police at 2.05pm, and there was no delay from the palace's side in transferring it for the Dasara "Pushparchane" ritual. She accused the police of poor crowd management holding them accountable for the delay. According to her, the delay occurred because government vehicles and private buses ferrying Dasara guests and artists blocked the route, thus obstructing the officials from moving the golden howdah. Meanwhile, in a related incident, the Mysuru District Journalists' Association has urged the District Commissioner, Lakshmikanth Reddy, to suspend the police officers who allegedly manhandled photojournalists during the procession, warning of agitation if action is not taken. *—Salar News*

India to develop missile testing range on east Coast

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

At a time when the Indian defence researchers are developing a large number of tactical missile systems, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has given approval for setting up a new missiles testing range in Andhra Pradesh. The proposal was cleared by the CCS headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week as per which the new missile range will come up in the Nagayalanka area of Andhra Pradesh, government sources told ANI. The new missile testing range will be used for test firing of tactical missile systems like the surface to air missile systems. *—ANI*

CRPF jawan killed, 4 injured in accident in MP

BHOPAL, 13 OCT

A jawan of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was killed and four others were injured when their patrolling vehicle hit a tree in Naxalite-affected Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh on Sunday, 13 October police said. Tarkeshwar (22), a native of Dhamtari in neighbouring Chhattisgarh, was killed on the spot, and four others sustained injuries, Balaghat Superintendent of Police Nagendra Singh told PTI. The injured, including inspector Umesh (30), assistant sub-inspectors Yadunandan Paswan (57), Birju Das (44), and jawan Rakesh Yadav (30), is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Gondia district in neighbouring Maharashtra, he said. Singh said the victims belonging to the 7th D Company 4 of the CRPF were out on a patrol task when their SUV rammed into a tree near Kudan village, about 100 km from the district headquarters. *—PTI*

HAPPY DASARA

Bengaluru women apply vermillion on each other as they participate in Sindoor Khela on Vijayadashami, the last day of Durga Puja festival celebrations at Ulsoor Lake on Sunday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Hindutva groups felicitate Gauri Lankesh's killers after bail

BENGALURU, 12 OCT

Members of Hindutva groups, including Sangh Parivar organisations and Shri Rama Sene, publicly honoured Parshuram Waghmore, the alleged shooter in the 2017 murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh, after his release on bail.

According to reports, Waghmore and his co-accused Manohar Yadve were felicitated in Vijayapura on Friday following their release from Bengaluru Central Prison. Both were among eight individuals granted bail by a Bengaluru Sessions Court on 9 October.

The bail was granted to key figures like Amol Kale, the alleged mastermind behind the assassination and Ganesh Miskin, the getaway driver. Thus, this brings the total number of accused out on bail to 16 out of 18 charged in Lankesh's assassination.

Upon their release on 11 October, Waghmore and Yadve performed a religious ceremony at the Kalika Temple in Vijayapura. They were then garlanded by Hindutva activists, who later paid tribute to a statue of Maratha King Shivaji.

The bail was granted to key figures like Amol Kale, the alleged mastermind behind the assassination and Ganesh Miskin, the getaway driver; Gauri Lankesh (Inset) PHOTO: X/WIKIPEDIA

Lankesh, a vocal critic of right-wing extremism, was shot dead outside her Bengaluru home on 5 September 2017. Her murder led to widespread national outrage and protests against the growing intolerance toward dissent in the country.

—Agencies

- Members of Hindutva groups, including Sangh Parivar organisations and Shri Rama Sene, publicly honoured Parshuram Waghmore, the alleged shooter in the 2017 murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh

Siddhartha Vihar Trust eligible for land: Priyank

BENGALURU, 13 OCT

Amid the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam, IT Minister Priyank Kharge on Sunday said that the Siddhartha Vihar Trust was fully eligible to apply for and receive an allotment of a 5-acre civic amenities (CA) site at the Aerospace Park in Bengaluru for an educational institution. His brother and Chairman of the Trust, Rahul M Kharge, withdrew his request on Sunday for the allotment of the land to set up a 'Multi-Skill Development Centre, Training Institutes and Research Centre'.

The move comes close on the heels of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi returning the 14 sites to MUDA after the Lokayukta police registered a case against Siddaramaiah, his wife and brother-in-law.

Reacting to the decision, the minister said although the Trust was eligible, the educational institution could not function effectively while constantly facing malafide, baseless and politically motivated allegations. He further said that the trust did not wish to be drawn into long-drawn controversies which would divert attention and efforts from the primary objective of education and social service.

"In light of the circumstances, the Trust wrote to the KIADB to withdraw our proposal and withdraw our request for a CA site for establishing a skill development and research centre," the minister said.

The Trust had submitted its proposal to the KIADB on 12 February, and a month later, the proposal was approved.

After the announcement, Rajya Sabha member Lahar Singh Siroya recalled his 25 August post, where he had issued a statement on the social media platform questioning the allotment of land.

"Will the Kharge family eventually have to give up this land like Mr Siddaramaiah will have to give up the controversial MUDA sites in Mysuru? Will this allocation be probed?" Siroya said.

BJP MP had complained to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot against the land allotment. *—PTI*

IT Minister Priyank Kharge PHOTO: PTI

'Siddique's death shows poor law & order situation'

KALABURAGI, 13 OCT

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said the assassination of Nationalist Congress Party leader Baba Siddique shows the poor law and order situation prevailing in Maharashtra.

The people will teach a lesson to the ruling coalition government in the state in the upcoming election, he said. NCP leader and former Maharashtra Minister Baba Siddique was shot by three men in Mumbai on Saturday, following which two of the assailants were arrested.

"It is quite visible that there is a complete failure of law and order in Maharashtra because in the broad daylight it happened," Kharge told reporters in his hometown of Kalaburagi. The district in North Karnataka shares a border with Maharashtra.

According to Kharge, a fortnight ago Siddiqui had shared information with the government that there was a possibility of attack on him. He even informed the police commissioner expressing his apprehension about whether he would survive or not, the Congress chief claimed. "Why no protection was given to him? Why the situation reached this stage and why the culprits could not be caught? It means law and order has collapsed there," he said. Kharge alleged that the government is in such a situation where three parties are taking decision and the bureaucrats are puzzled about whom to listen to and whom not to. *—PTI*

Disconnect between Bhagwat's remarks and govt's conduct: Sibal

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

A day after RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's Vijayadashami address, Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Sunday said there is a disconnect between his statement and what the BJP-led government, which enjoys the Hindutva outfit's support, does on the ground.

On Saturday, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief said India has become stronger and more respected globally with enhanced credibility over the last few years but sinister conspiracies are testing the country's resolve.

Referring to Bhagwat's speech, Sibal said, "Mohan Bhagwat has given a good statement on Vijayadashami. He said that gods are divided in this country, it should not happen, the saints are divided, it should not happen. It is a country of different religions and languages."

Mohan Bhagwat PHOTO: PTI

"Saint Valmiki wrote Ramayana, and hence all the Hindus should celebrate Valmiki Diwas. Why is it not happening? He said that as long as harmony is achieved, this will remain. I welcome his statement," he said.

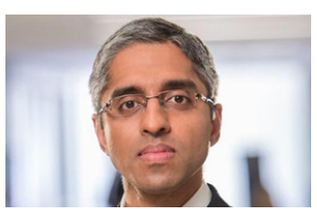
There have been many divisions in society after 2014 and minorities were targeted and bulldozers put in operation, the former Union minister said. He said it was the responsibility of the government to ensure the security of the country and its citizens, especially minorities and people of the Valmiki community who "are living in fear". *—PTI*

US-India collaboration for mental health possible: Vivek

BENGALURU, 13 OCT

US Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy has said that mental health is an issue on which his country and India can work together, so that it not only benefits the two countries, but the entire world.

He said it is time to prioritise and accelerate the work on mental health, because the consequences have been too high, and they will only get worse unless we make this issue a priority. "I'll just say this (mental health) is an issue where the US and India can work together, where we can learn from each other, where we can collaborate on programmes, where we can support each other," he said.



Vivek Murthy PHOTO: PTI

He said he was proud of the US-India health partnership for six decades, during which both countries have worked on smallpox, polio, HIV, tuberculosis and Covid-19, and many other health challenges. *—PTI*

CONFERENCE ON 3 NOV

Must expose conspiracy to seize waqf properties: Jamiat

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind chief Maulana Arshad Madani on Sunday said it is essential to "expose the conspiracy" to seize waqf properties through the Waqf Amendment Bill and that a conference will be held next month to hold thorough discussions on what course of action should be taken to deal with such threats.

In a statement, Madani said the Jamiat has taken effective measures to ensure the protection of waqf properties from 1923 to 2013 and "we are moving forward with that commitment."

A grand conference of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind will be held in Delhi on 3 November, 2024, to promote the spirit of equality and compassion on the basis of humanity, uphold democracy and protect the Constitution of the country, he said.

It is essential to expose the conspiracy to seize waqf properties under the guise of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, which aims to deprive us of this valuable heritage.

Madani further said the 3 November conference will see thorough discussions on what course of action should be taken to address such grave situations and threats, and a roadmap will be prepared for the way forward.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind chief Maulana Arshad Madani PHOTO: PTI

The communal mindset is making a failed attempt and a "planned conspiracy" to marginalise a specific community, he alleged.

In preparation for the conference which will be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here, Madani addressed the members and representatives from various states at the Jamiat office. He emphasised the purpose and objectives of the conference, stating that the current situation in the country is unprecedented in its seriousness. *—PTI*

Its Oppn's 'petty' vs BJP's 'shameful' politics

BJP asserts that those behind Baba's murder won't be spared; Cong demands CM's resignation

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Those involved in the killing of NCP leader Baba Siddique will not be spared, BJP asserted on Sunday and slammed the Opposition parties for indulging in "petty politics" on the crime.

"Baba Siddique was a great human being. We are all saddened by his murder. Two of those involved in his murder have been caught and probe is on to find out those who were behind this," BJP national spokesperson and former Union minister Syed Shahnawaz Hussain told PTI.

Maharashtra Police will not spare anyone involved in Siddique's murder, he asserted.

Meanwhile, Opposition parties said the murder Siddique was shocking and shameful for the state and claimed there was anarchy in Mumbai.

If a leader from the ruling alliance is not safe, how can the government keep the common man safe? NCP (SP) state president Jayant Patil questioned.

In a statement, Patil also noted that earlier, a BJP MLA in the state had opened fire in a police station while a former corporator was killed during a Facebook live session.

Congress demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde over Siddique's murder.

"Atrocities against women continue in the state, while gang war has become routine in a city like Pune. It has become clear that law and order in the state has reached its lowest. If a leader from the ruling alliance is not safe, how can the government keep the common man safe?" he said.

All India Congress Committee in-charge of Maharashtra Ramesh Chennithala claimed Siddique's murder shows there is "complete anarchy in Mumbai."

Shiv Sena UBT leader Sanjay Raut called for the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister and state Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader further alleged that while gang wars in Mumbai had ended some years ago, there was a gang war going on in the government. *—PTI/ANI*

Actor Salman Khan leaves the residence of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique (inset) who was shot dead, in Mumbai, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Mortal remains of NCP leader Baba Siddiqui being taken from residence for funeral procession, in, Mumbai on Sunday **PHOTO: ANI**

People of not only Maharashtra but the entire country are scared of the incident of NCP leader being shot dead in public in Mumbai.

-Arvind Kejriwal, AAP Convenor

Such acts of violence have no place in civil society and deserve the strongest condemnation

-MK Stalin, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

Let us show respect and compassion rather than allowing opportunistic voices to turn this tragedy into a political spectacle

-Ajit Pawar, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister

Friends of celebs, Baba was praised during pandemic

MUMBAI, 13 OCT

Former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, who was shot dead in Mumbai, was a popular figure in Bollywood circles and had earned praise for supplying life-saving medicines to patients during the Covid pandemic.

During the peak of the pandemic, the 66-year-old leader had arranged highly sought-after medicines for needy patients.

His son Zeeshan Siddique is currently the Congress MLA from Mumbai.

NCP leaders were banking on Siddique to be instrumental in spreading the party's wings in Mumbai especially in the Muslim dominated wards for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections.

Siddique was an MLA for three consecutive terms in 1999, 2004 and 2009. He was a minister of state for food and civil supplies, labour and FDA in the state government (2004-08), and was also a municipal corporator for two consecutive terms.

He has also served as the chairperson and senior vice-president of the Mumbai Regional Congress Committee and parliamentary board member of Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee.

"My journey was with Indira Gandhi-Rajiv Gandhi-Sanjay Gandhi. The current Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is like my father. But sometimes some decisions have to be made in personal life," Siddique had said before joining the NCP and thanked activists and leaders who supported him in his journey of 48 years in the Congress. *—PTI*

Contract killing, biz rivalry among angles to be probed

MUMBAI, 13 OCT

The Mumbai police have launched a probe into the killing of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique from different angles, including a possible contract killing, business rivalry or threat over a slum rehabilitation project, officials said on Sunday.

The murder of NCP leader, who represented Bandra (West) seat three times in the assembly. is suspected to be a pre-planned act, a police official said.

A Congressman since his student days, Siddique quit the grand old party to join Ajit Pawar's NCP in February this year. He had a Y-category security.

The shocking incident has prompted the Opposition to question the law and order situation in the state, where the assembly elections are expected to be held next month.

He was also known for his grand Iftar parties which were attended by top Bollywood stars.

A prominent Muslim leader from Mumbai, he was also known be close to several Bollywood stars, including Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan and Sanjay Dutt.

The assassination of Baba Siddique is the first high-profile political murder in Mumbai in last three decades.

In the early 90s, Ramdas Nayak and Premkumar Sharma, then sitting BJP MLAs from Bandra and Khetwadi, respectively, were shot dead.

Shiv Sena legislators Vitthal Chavan and Ramesh More were also gunned down in Mumbai in the 90s. *—PTI*

I stand with BJP: Rao Inderjit junks reports of rebellion

CHANDIGARH, 13 OCT

Union minister Rao Inderjit Singh Sunday junked reports of a rebellion against the BJP by him and asserted that he stands firmly with his party. "Some media channels are running baseless news in which I am being shown as a rebel along with nine MLAs," Singh posted on X in Hindi. "All this is baseless and unfounded news. I and all my fellow MLAs (from the Ahirwal region) stand firmly with the Bharatiya Janata Party," the Union minister of state said. In the recently concluded Haryana Assembly polls, BJP ended up with its best-ever haul of 48 seats, 11 more than those won by Congress in the elections, while parties like the JJP and AAP were decimated and the INLD managed to win just two seats. Three Independents also won. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

BJP isn't giving due respect to its old cadre: Pawar

MUMBAI, 13 OCT

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday claimed that BJP wasn't giving due respect to its old cadre and is neglecting them. Pawar was speaking at the party office after inducting former BJP MLA Charan Waghmare into his fold. NCP (SP) chief said the schedule for the state assembly elections will be announced in two to three days, and meritorious workers inducted into the party will work unitedly with the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partners. He claimed that a senior BJP leader told him unlike in the past, BJP wasn't giving due respect to its loyal old cadre and involving them in its functioning. He alleged that BJP has neglected and ignored its cadre, which has worked hard to strengthen the organisation since the Jan Sangh days. Elections to the state assembly are expected to be held next month. MVA alliance comprises the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP). *—PTI*

NCP (SP) Chief Sharad Pawar with Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Uddhav Thackeray and other leaders, in Mumbai, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

MVA releases 'panchnama' of Shinde govt

MUMBAI, 13 OCT

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi on Sunday released a document it called the "gaddaarancha panchnama" (evidential record of traitors) to slam the Eknath Shinde government and accused it of betraying Maharashtra in favour of neighbouring Gujarat.

MVA, comprising Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP), has often accused the state government of not doing enough to stop mega projects from going to Gujarat.

Addressing an MVA press conference here, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said, "It is not just me and Sharad Pawar who have been betrayed by traitors (a reference to the splits in the Shiv Sena and NCP) but Maharashtra itself has faced betrayal. This is the biggest sin of the Mahayuti (ruling alliance of Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena, BJP and Ajit Pawar-led NCP)."

MVA leaders said the 'gaddaarancha panchnama' lists the state government's "rate card for purchase of MLAs and corporators, transfer of government officials, recruitment in government jobs" as well as scams in the Dharavi redevelopment project, (Mumbai) road concretisation and in tenders.

Assembly polls in Maharashtra are likely to be held next month. The term of the current assembly ends on 26 November. *—PTI*

Why all soldiers' lives not valued equally: Rahul

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

After the death of two Agniveers in Nashik during training, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Sunday demanded answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on why the life of one soldier is more valuable than the other.

He asked why the families of the two soldiers, who died as 'Agniveers' would not get the same pension and benefits as other martyred soldiers and said that he would keep fighting against this "injustice".

"The death of two Agniveers - Gohil Vishwaraj Singh and Saifat Sheet - during training in Nashik is very tragic. My deepest condolences to their families.

"This incident once again raises serious questions on the Agniveer scheme, which the BJP government has failed to answer. Will the families of Gohil and Saifat receive timely compensation that is equivalent to the compensation for any other martyred soldier?" Gandhi asked in a post in Hindi on X. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

KPCC MEET AHEAD OF BYPOLLS

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee President K Sudhakaran; AICC General Secretaries KC Venugopal and Deepa Das Munshi; Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan; UDF Convener MM Hassan; MP K Suresh; ex-Assembly speaker N Sakthan; Kalpetta MLA Siddique; AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan; Wandoor MLA and others during a KPCC committee meeting in Kochi on Sunday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Kejriwal to support Omar in running 'half-state' like J&K

DODA, 13 OCT

AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday congratulated National Conference (NC) Vice President Omar Abdullah for winning the Assembly elections and said that he should consult him in case he faces any problem in running a "half-state" like Jammu and Kashmir.

"Omar Abdullah is going to take over as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir in the next few days. I congratulate him for being the chief minister of the INDIA alliance. We will fully support him in running a successful government and hope Jammu and Kashmir treads the path of development under his leadership," Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal, who has run into troubles with the BJP-led Central government many times during his rule, was in Doda to thank the people for electing his party representative Mehraj Malik as the first member of the legislative assembly in Jammu and Kashmir.

"AAP is formally supporting the Omar-led government and I hope his government will give Mehraj responsibility so that he can not only work for Doda but provide his services to the people of J&K," said Kejriwal.

Thanking the people for voting Mehraj, Kejriwal said his party's historic win will change the situation and history of Jammu and Kashmir in the next 10 years. *—PTI*

AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal addresses a public meeting, in Doda district, Jammu & Kashmir, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Mahagathbandhan demands 'official' status for Bhojpuri

PATNA, 13 OCT

The demand for grant of "official language" status to Bhojpuri, arguably the most widely spoken dialect in Bihar, has intensified with the Opposition Mahagathbandhan strongly coming out in support of it in the state. Senior leaders of RJD, Congress and CPI(ML) Liberation, constituents of the Mahagathbandhan, said they would raise the issue in Parliament. The old demand got a fresh impetus after the Union Cabinet's recent decision to accord classical language status to five more languages - Marathi, Bengali, Pali, Prakrit and Assamese. The number of such languages now is 11, since Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Odia got the tag earlier. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs website, there are demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Eighth Schedule and one of them is Bhojpuri. *—PTI*

Rajasthan to give ad-hoc bonus to 6L state employees

JAIPUR, 13 OCT

Rajasthan government has approved giving ad-hoc bonuses to about six lakh employees as a Diwali gift. According to an official statement, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma has approved giving ad-hoc bonuses to the state employees as a Diwali gift, which will benefit about 6 lakh staff of the state government. The additional financial burden of ad hoc bonuses will be around Rs 500 crore. Adhoc bonus will also be payable to Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad employees, the statement said. *—PTI*

'POSSIBILITIES AHEAD'

Talks on after SP snubs Cong in UP

LUCKNOW, 13 OCT

Congress strategists on Sunday said discussions on ticket distribution are ongoing with the Samajwadi Party and there are "possibilities ahead", days after its ally declared candidates for six of the 10 Uttar Pradesh assembly seats where bypolls are scheduled.

SP had announced candidates for six of the 10 Uttar Pradesh assembly seats after Congress lost the assembly polls in Haryana.

Congress has been demanding five seats in the bypolls for which the schedule is yet to be announced.

Congress national general secretary and Uttar Pradesh in-charge, Avinash Pandey told PTI, "If the results do not meet our expectations, it is natural for disappointment to arise among our workers and leaders. However, we are committed to our objectives in UP - the era of jungle raj must come to an end."

A Congress worker said the loss in Haryana has empowered SP to declare candidates for six seats in the state.

In the last Lok Sabha elections, Congress, in alliance with SP contested 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh. SP won 37 seats, while Congress managed to secure six, providing a morale boost for a party that had been sidelined in the state for years.

With eyes on the 2027 UP assembly polls, Congress was eager for the upcoming bypolls to test its strategies.

The Sisamau seat has become vacant following the conviction of SP MLA Irfan Solanki, while the others are unoccupied due to resignations from MLAs who were elected to Parliament. *—PTI*

Congress national general secretary and Uttar Pradesh in-charge, Avinash Pandey **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong selling hatred in its 'shop of love': Naqvi

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Slamming Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's BJP is a "party of terrorists" remark, senior leader of the saffron party Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi alleged on Sunday that Congress is selling hatred in its "shop of love".

Naqvi said the Opposition party has become a "multinational distribution centre" of "certificates" labelling nationalists as terrorists and anti-nationals as nationalists.

Kharge alleged on Saturday that BJP is a "party of terrorists", as he hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his recent remarks that the Congress is being run by a "gang of urban Naxals".

Kharge also accused those in the saffron party of "lynching and beating" people, and committing atrocities against the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

The "dynasty's animosity and hostility" towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi is becoming a "political disaster" for the grand old party, the former Union minister said.

Communal political statements made by some champions of pseudo-secularism even on a message of national unity and integrity is like "empty vessels making noise", he said.

Congress is selling hatred in its "mohabbat ki dukaan", Naqvi alleged. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Wangchuk, 20 others detained for protesting in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and 20 other protestors were detained by the Delhi Police for protesting outside the Ladakh Bhawan here on Sunday, officials said. Around 20 to 25 protesters, who were on fast with Wangchuk, were detained and taken to the Mandir Marg police station, they said. Heavy police deployment was arranged to maintain the law and order. Some of the protesters argued that they were not protesting, but sitting peacefully. A senior police officer said the protesters do not have any permission to sit outside the Ladakh Bhawan. Wangchuk, along with his supporters, marched to Delhi from Leh demanding Ladakh's inclusion in the sixth schedule of the Constitution. The group is demanding a meeting with top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The protesters are also demanding statehood, a public service commission for Ladakh. —*PTI*

'No spot booking at Sabarimala, all to get darshan'

T'PURAM, 13 OCT

Kerala Devaswom Minister VN Vasavan on Sunday made it clear that there will be no spot booking at Sabarimala, but assured that no devotee who comes to the Lord Ayyappa temple during the annual Mandalam-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season will miss out on 'darshan'. The assurance came a day after BJP threatened to carry out agitations if the government goes ahead with its plan to not allow spot booking and permit darshan only through the virtual queue system. In the virtual queue system, pilgrims can book their darshan tickets and prasadam online through the official website of the Sabarimala temple. In spot booking, pilgrims can book slots for their darshan at designated centres identified by the Devaswom Board. —*PTI*

Undertrial booked under POCSO hangs himself in Gujarat

HIMATNAGAR, 13 OCT

A 24-year-old undertrial allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself in the toilet of a barrack in Himatnagar sub-jail in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday morning, and an entry was made in the station diary of Himatnagar B-division police station later in the day, the police official said. Vipul Mathasuliya hanged himself from a rope tied to the ventilator of a toilet on the first floor of the barrack on Saturday morning when prisoners lined up for breakfast, said J G Chavda, district jail superintendent, Himatnagar District Prison. Mathasuliya was accused of raping a minor and was booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. —*PTI*

Encounter in UP, wanted criminal killed

BULANDSHAHR, 13 OCT

A man wanted in 48 criminal cases and carrying a reward of Rs 1.5 lakh on his head was killed in an encounter with police here in which two police personnel were also injured on Sunday, officials said. The incident took place when Circle Officer, Anupshahr, police station in-charge Ahaar, and the SWAT team were pursuing two suspects on a motorcycle. The suspects, upon noticing the police, attempted to flee and opened fire on the officers. Rajesh was named in over 48 cases ranging from attempt to murder and causing physical harm lodged against him. A reward of Rs 1.5 lakh had been previously announced for Rajesh's arrest. —*PTI*

Poor medical care in jail led to Saibaba's death: NGO

He died 7 months after serving 10 yrs in prison for a Maoist case

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

NGO National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled has claimed that prolonged imprisonment and inadequate medical care exacerbated pre-existing health issues of former DU professor and disability rights activist GN Saibaba and contributed to his untimely death.

Saibaba died at a state-run hospital in Hyderabad due to post-operative complications on Saturday, seven months after he was acquitted in a Maoist links case. He was 54.

In a statement, the non-governmental organisation underscored the challenges Saibaba faced during his incarceration and the toll it took on his health.

The former professor, who had polio and was affected by multiple severe health conditions, was released just months ago after 10 years in prison on charges that the NPRD termed "false".

According to the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD), Saibaba's prolonged imprisonment and inadequate medical care exacerbated his pre-existing health issues, contributing to his untimely death.

Saibaba had alleged in August this year that he was not taken to a hospital for nine months by authorities despite the left side of his body getting paralysedand was just given painkillers in the Nagpur Central Jail, where he was lodged since his arrest in the case in 2014.

The former English professor had claimed that he was "kidnapped" and arrested by the police in order to silence his voice. —*PTI*

GN Saibaba died at a state-run hospital in Hyderabad due to post-operative complications on Saturday PHOTO: ANI

Body to be donated to hospital: Kin

The body of former DU professor GN Saibaba who passed away in Hyderabad, will be donated to a hospital as he wished, said a statement issued by his family on Sunday. Saibaba's body will be kept at Jawahar Nagar, Hyderabad, for his relatives, friends and well-wishers to pay homage, on Monday. fterwards, his body will be donated to a hospital as per his wishes. His eyes have already been donated to LV Prasad Eye Hospital. —*PTI*

2 coaches of empty local train derail in Mumbai; services hit

MUMBAI, 13 OCT

Two coaches of an empty local train derailed while entering a car shed from Mumbai Central, affecting operations on the Western Railway on Sunday afternoon, officials said. There were no reports of any injuries as the train was empty when it derailed around 12.10 pm, said Vineet Abhishek, chief public relations officer of Western Railway.

The derailment has severely affected the suburban services as the slow track towards Dadar is blocked, he said. "The slow track towards Dadar between Churchgate and Mumbai Central is blocked. However, trains are being diverted to the fast line between these two stations to ensure continued operations," the official said. He said efforts are underway to rerail the coaches and restore services.

Meanwhile, a coach of the Gita Jayanti Express train caught fire on Sunday morning in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur district, an official said. No casualty was reported and the fire was immediately controlled, he said.

The train coach caught fire at around 7.30 am near Ishanagar police station, 25 km from the district headquarters.

The incident delayed the train for about one hour, station master Ashish Yadav said. The train had a two-minute halt at Ishanagar station. —*PTI*

FIR filed after empty cylinder found on rly track in U'khand

Loco pilots of goods train BCNHL/32849 on Sunday morning informed the Station master here that a cylinder was found on the track between Landaura (LDR) and Dhandhera (DNRA) at km 1553/01.

As per information from the Northern Railway CPRO, the spot is on KM from the DNRA station. On receiving information, the pointsman immediately arrived at the spot and found the cylinder on the track empty. It was later placed under the custody of the station master at DNRA. The area is surrounded by a civilian residential colony on one side. —*ANI*

'Consensual': Thane court acquits man in rape case

THANE, 13 OCT

A court in Maharashtra's Thane district has acquitted a 26-year-old man in a case of kidnapping and raping a teenage girl in 2018, observing that the physical relations between the accused and the victim appear to be consensual.

Special Judge (POCSO Act cases) Ruby U Malvankar, in the order on September 21, said victim was not a child at the relevant time and therefore, offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act do not attract, it said.

The prosecution has failed to prove the charges against the accused, who needs to be given the benefit of doubt, said the order, a copy of the order was made available on Saturday.

The prosecution told the court that on 11 April, 2018, the victim, then aged 17, went missing from a place where she was working as a domestic help in Thane district.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The court noted the victim claimed she was taken to the house of a relative of the accused and raped multiple times. However, her testimony revealed a consensual relationship and a desire to marry the accused, it said.

The medical evidence on record shows there were sexual relations between the victim and the accused, the court said.

One of the prosecution's witness is the mother of the victim whose evidence is more in the nature of hearsay and cannot be given extra weightage than required, it said. — *PTI*

Delhi breathing clean air despite Dussehra: Minister

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said on Sunday that in spite of Dussehra celebrations in the capital, people are breathing clean air, and added the number of days with "good", "satisfactory", and "moderate" air quality is going up, indicating an improvement in managing pollution.

Rai also said that Delhi's Air Quality Index has remained outside the "poor" category after Dussehra, however, as per the Central Pollution Control Board the city's air quality was recorded in the "poor" category with a reading of 225 at 12 pm.

In a press conference on Sunday, Rai said every year after Dussehra, the air quality usually dips into the "poor" category, but this year Delhi is experiencing clean air. —*PTI*

47K plaints filed over caste atrocities, land disputes

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Over 47,000 complaints have been received by the National Commission for Scheduled Caste in the last four years, according to official data, with atrocities against Dalits, and disputes related to land and governments jobs being the main issues.

As per information shared by the NCSC in response to an RTI filed by PTI, 11,917 complaints were received in 2020-21, 13,964 complaints registered in 2021-22, 12,402 in 2022-23 and 9,550 complaints so far.

Speaking to PTI about the data, NCSC chairperson Kishor Makwana said the most common complaints received by the commission are related to atrocities against the Scheduled Castes community, followed by land disputes and issues related to services in government sector.

Makwana added that he is holding hearings four times a week to meet people and listen to their problems.

A senior NCSC official said the highest number of complaints have been filed from Uttar Pradesh among all states. The commission receives 200-300 complaints every day and many of them get resolved within days.

Of 51,656 cases registered under the law in 2022, Uttar Pradesh accounted for 23.78 per cent of the total cases with 12,287, followed by Rajasthan at 8,651 (16.75 per cent) and Madhya Pradesh at 7,732 (14.97 per cent). —*PTI*

Andhra: 2 women gangraped by 4 in a paper mill

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Four men broke into an under-construction paper mill and allegedly gang-raped two women in Sri Sathya district of Andhra Pradesh, the police said on Sunday.

The incident happened in the Chilamanthur police station area. Superintendent of Police, Sri Sathya district, V Ratna said that there were four members in the family; an elderly couple, their son and their daughter-in-law. The victims in the case are the elderly woman, her daughter-in-law.

The four accused broke into their room and assaulted the two men; an elderly man and his son.

The two men reportedly used to work as security guards in the mill. The accused fled the scene immediately after committing the crime.

The police have launched an investigation into the matter and are still on the lookout for the culprits. —*PTI*

RG KAR PROTEST

People gather at the site of the hunger strike by junior doctors in protest against the alleged sexual assault and murder of a trainee doctor, in Kolkata, West Bengal, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

Docs' strike enters 9th day, others on 'symbolic fast'

KOLKATA, 13 OCT

The hunger strike by junior doctors of West Bengal to press for their demands following the RG Kar hospital incident entered the ninth day on Sunday, when people are holding a "symblic fast" at various parts of the state to express solidarity with the agitators.

Three of the junior doctors who were observing 'fast unto death' in Kolkata and Siliguri city in the northern part of the state have so far been hospitalised after their condition deteriorated.

"Their conditions are worsening but the state administration remains unmoved," a leader of the agitating Junior Doctors Forum said.

Several people are also observing the "symblic fast" during the day in Malda and Murshidabad district.

The agitating doctors have urged people to observe "Arandhan" (no cooking) on Sunday to show solidarity and support for their cause.

The hunger strike from 5 October followed nearly 50 days of 'cease work' in two phases. Their agitation began after an on-duty postgraduate trainee was allegedly raped and murdered inside state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on 9 August. —*PTI*

77 Kalyani JNM docs threaten mass resignation

KOLKATA, 13 OCT

Over 75 senior doctors at West Bengal's Kalyani JNM Hospital have threatened a mass resignation, seeking justice for the RG Kar hospital victim, and expressing solidarity with junior medics on a fast-unto-death to press for their demands.

A total of 77 doctors of the medical facility have informed the Registrar of West Bengal Health University via email about their decision to stop work, starting 14 October.

They cited "mental devastation" and "inability to work in the current state of mind" among the reasons.

In their communication, the doctors said they stand in solidarity with the junior medics on a fast-unto-death, whose health is deteriorating. They also expressed concern over the "apparent lack of visible effort from the state.".

The Kalyani JNM Hospital doctors have given authorities time till 14 October to take steps towards resolving the problem. —*PTI*

Mob beats up man in hospital compound, security questioned

A group of people assaulted a youth injuring him after entering the trauma care department of state-run SSKM Hospital in Kolkata on Sunday. Youth, who was accompanying his friends to the trauma care centre, was thrashed by around 15 men leaving him injured. —*PTI*

VIDYARAMBHAM

Children offer prayers during the 'Vidyarambham' ceremony at the Saraswathi Devi Temple, in Thiruvananthapuram, Sunday. In Kerala, Vijayadashami is observed as the day of Vidyarambham, the beginning of learning, when children write their first letters while praying to Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge PHOTO: PTI

SQUAT ON RLY TRACKS

Punjab farmers protest over 'tardy' paddy purchase

LUDHIANA/AMRITSAR, 13 OCT

Punjab farmers on Sunday blocked roads and squatted on rail tracks at many places in the state as part of their protest against the alleged tardy procurement of paddy in the ongoing Kharif marketing season.

While the Samyukta Kisan Morcha has given a call for a statewide road blockade from 12 to 3 pm, the Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) has also given a call for 'rail roko' for three hours.

Police diverted road traffic through alternative routes.

In Ludhiana, farmers disrupted road traffic at many places, including Samrala, Kohara, Khanna, Raikot, Doraha, Payal and Jagraon.

Farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal said despite assurances by the state government regarding the smooth procurement of paddy, farmers are facing problems in grain markets.

In Amritsar, protesting farmers squatted on Wallha railway crossing to protest against the slow purchase of the paddy crop.

Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Parminder Singh Ugrah said farmers have blocked the Amritsar-Pathankot rail track.

Farmers have also held road blockades at places, including Attari, Kukrawal village near Ajnala town.

In Sangrur, farmers squatted on the rail track at the Sunam railway station. In Moga, farmers blocked Ferozepur-Ludhiana national highway near Duneke. —*PTI*

Bhartiya Kisan union Ekta members take part in a protest against government in Patiala, Punjab, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

ENDANGERED SPECIES FOR SALE

The Macedonian Grayling, one of Europe's most endangered butterflies, is found only in the Pletvar hills of North Macedonia. Its survival is threatened by human activity, particularly poaching, as collectors easily capture the butterflies due to weak legal enforcement and lack of protective measures. Poachers sell the captured specimens online, exacerbating the species' risk of extinction

PHOTO: X

Ladakhis fear for future amid Indo-China clashes

The bubbling sound of water boiling on the stove and the aroma of spinach dal fill the air in Tashi Angmo's kitchen as she rolls dough to make a type of Tibetan bread.

"This is a dish which we call timok in Ladakh and tingmo across the border in Tibet," she says as she prepares the apparatus to steam the dough, she has rolled into balls resembling dumplings. "It's a delicious meal after a hard day's work."

Angmo, 51, lives in Chushul, a village which sits at an altitude of 4,350m in Ladakh, one of the highest regions in the world, known for its pristine rivers and lakes, high valleys and mountains and clear skies. Chushul also lies about 8km from Line of Actual Control with China, the disputed, de facto border between the two countries.

"I was around 11 years old when I realised that my family and I lived very close to the Chinese border. Back then, we used to be a family of shepherds, and I often went near the border with my father, to take our sheep herding," Angmo says.

She now works as a labourer doing a variety of tasks from cleaning roads to helping with construction and cooking meals for other workers, for the Border Roads Organisation – the Indian Defence Ministry's initiative to maintain roads in the subcontinent's border areas.

"We even used to trade apricots and barley which grew in our village with the Chinese shepherds. In return, we brought back chicken, some Chinese cookies and also teapots!" she exclaims and points to the teapots which she still keeps in her kitchen cabinet.

Even the Sino-India war in 1962 over border and territorial disputes between the neighbours, after New Delhi had given shelter to the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan refugees, did not undo that delicate balance.

What did was a deadly clash in the summer of 2020. As the world was absorbed in its battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian and Chinese soldiers fought with sticks, stones and their bare hands along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh's Galwan valley. Each side claimed that the other's troops had crossed into their territory. The close combat fighting led to the death of 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers. These were the first deaths along the border in decades.

Kunze Dolma, 71, thinks education can bring peace between India and China ***PHOTO: AL JAZEERA***

Since then, both sides have stepped up border patrols and moved troops to the region, and their troops have occasionally engaged in standoffs.

In many Ladakhi villages bordering China, grazing and farming close to the frontier has now been restricted by the Indian military. Boating in the pristine Pangong Tso lake, parts of which are claimed by both New Delhi and Beijing, has also been restricted to only military boats.

"We can't go near the border any more or trade with Chinese people. Shepherds – most of whom are nomads – have also lost land close to the border since the Indian military oversees the area," she says.

Donning a pink scarf and a grey sweater, Kunjan Dolma, who is in her late 30s, belongs to the Changpa community – seminomadic Tibetan people who live in the Changtang plateau in eastern Ladakh. She lives in Chushul during the winter months and is nomadic throughout the rest of the year.

"In a way, the military restrictions also make sense. They protect us from the Chinese soldiers who I fear might take away our sheep in case we go very close to the border, she says.

But Dolma's daughter, like many young people from the nomadic families of the Changtang plateau, has begun turning to other professions to earn a living. Dolma added that military restrictions on grazing land have also increased the momentum of young nomads turning away from this traditional way of life.

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September, India's Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar addressed the situation in eastern Ladakh and said: "Right now, both sides have troops who are deployed forward."

According to local media reports, China has denied Indian troops access to key patrolling points in eastern Ladakh, claiming these regions belong to Beijing. New Delhi says this has made it harder for the Indian army to carry out its regular border security activities in the region.

Counting the beads on her Buddhist mala and chanting a prayer, 71-year-old Kunze Dolma, who lived through the 1962 Sino-India war in Chushul when she was about nine years old, says she thinks education is what can bring about peace.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

SALAR سالار

Climate policies now more gender-responsive: UN

There has been a rise in gender-responsive climate policies and actions globally, according to a new synthesis report from the UN Climate Change secretariat.

Around 81 per cent of the Parties to the Paris Agreement referred to gender in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). This is a significant improvement on when Parties first communicated their intended NDCs in 2015, of which only a few included references to gender, according to analysis by the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO).

The report Implementation of gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and action synthesised information on Parties' reporting of gender-responsive climate policies, plans, strategies and action in nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans, national communications, long-term low-emission development strategies and biennial transparency reports submitted to the secretariat as of 31 July. Till that date, the total number of NDCs of 195 Parties was 168.

Gender was often referred to in the context of stakeholder engagement, including formal arrangements in place for consulting with local communities, Indigenous Peoples, the private sector, civil society, academia and women's associations and youth associations in those NDCs, according to the report.

Of the Parties that referred to gender in those NDCs, 62.3 per cent described efforts to strengthen institutional mechanisms for mainstreaming gender considerations across climate action. Some 11.5 per cent described initiatives aimed at increasing the gender balance and diversity of stakeholder groups engaged to support monitoring and evaluation of adaptation action, including initiatives targeting the agriculture, forestry and water resources sectors, according to the analysis. Around 55.7 per cent affirmed their commitment to gender equality, it showed.

The new report noted that current gender references primarily focus on women, especially in the context of vulnerability, with very few references consider men who may be in vulnerable situations.

The authors of the report also observed that while developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDC) have been consistently integrating gender into their regular reporting under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), developed countries often provide limited or no references to gender, particularly in National Communications and long-term low-emission development strategy.

Need for gender-sensitive responses

Climate change has serious ramifications in four dimensions of food security: Availability, accessibility, utilisation and food systems stability.

Women farmers currently account for 45-80 per cent of all food production in developing countries depending on the region. About two-thirds of the female labour force in developing countries and more than 90 per cent in many African countries are engaged in agricultural work.

With climate change, conventional food sources are becoming increasingly unreliable and rare. Women often lose both their income and harvests, which are frequently their only means of sustenance and financial support.Related increases in food prices make food more inaccessible to poor people, in particular to women and girls whose health has been found to decline more than male health in times of food shortages.

Moreover, women are often excluded from decision-making on access to and the use of land and resources critical to their livelihoods.

The report suggested that many see gender-responsive strategies as a means to enhance the ambition and efficacy of climate initiatives. Most Parties reiterated their dedication to promoting gender equality as an essential part of this effort.

This was reflected in the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake agreed at the 28th Conference of Parties to UNFCCC, which encouraged Parties to implement climate policy and action that is gender-responsive.

The next round of NDCs (3.0), which Parties are preparing to submit in 2025, will serve as a crucial chance to enhance collaborative efforts to attain gender equality and successful climate results.

—PTI

Women are often excluded from decision-making on access to and the use of land and resources critical to their livelihoods ***PHOTO: AI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

AI takes centre stage in 2024 Nobel Prizes, shaping Science's future

The 2024 Nobel Prizes in physics and chemistry have given us a glimpse of the future of science. Artificial intelligence (AI) was central to the discoveries honoured by both awards. You have to wonder what Alfred Nobel, who founded the prizes, would think of it all.

We are certain to see many more Nobel medals handed to researchers who made use of AI tools. As this happens, we may find the scientific methods honoured by the Nobel committee depart from straightforward categories like "physics", "chemistry" and "physiology or medicine".

We may also see the scientific backgrounds of recipients retain a looser connection with these categories. This year's physics prize was awarded to the American John Hopfield, at Princeton University, and British-born Geoffrey Hinton, from the University of Toronto. While Hopfield is a physicist, Hinton studied experimental psychology before gravitating to AI.

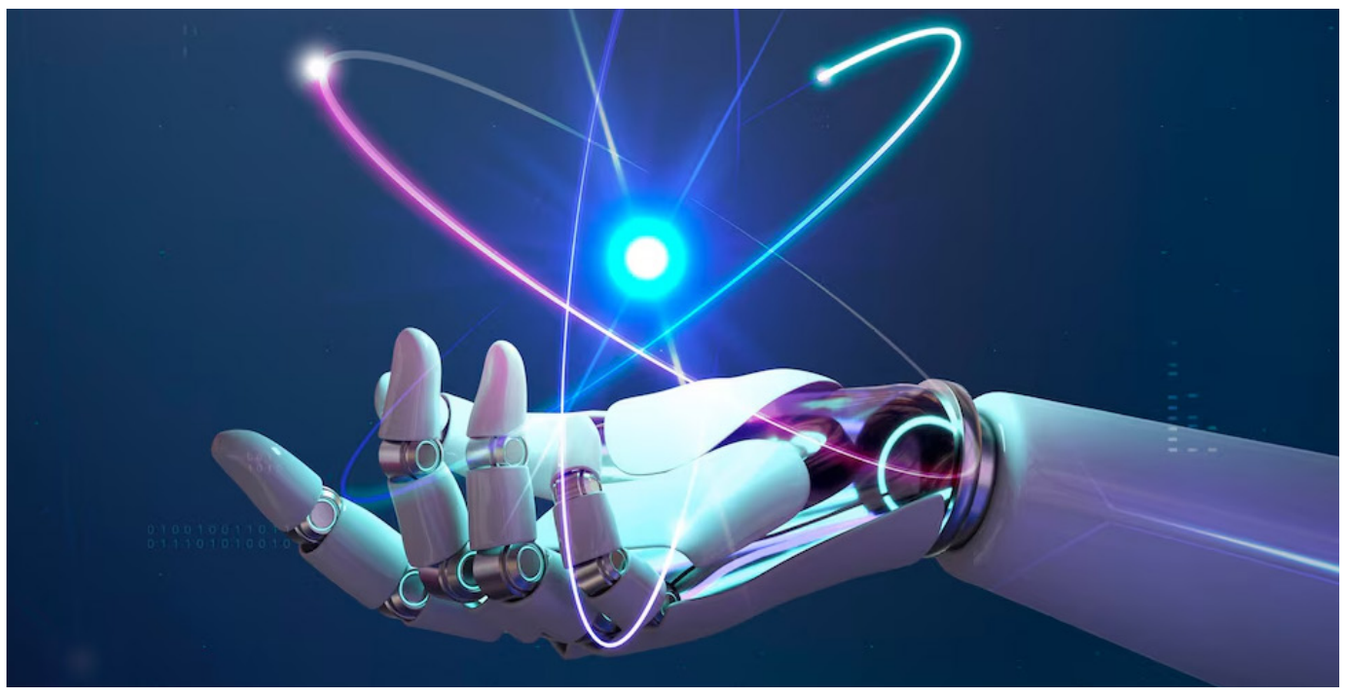
The chemistry prize was shared between biochemist David Baker, from the University of Washington, and the computer scientists Demis Hassabis and John Jumper, who are both at Google DeepMind in the UK.

There is a close connection between the AI-based advances honoured in the physics and chemistry categories. Hinton helped develop an approach used by DeepMind to make its breakthrough in predicting the shapes of proteins.

The physics laureates, Hinton in particular, laid the foundations of the powerful field known as machine learning. This is a subset of AI that's concerned with algorithms, sets of rules for performing specific computational tasks.

Hopfield's work is not particularly in use today, but the backpropagation algorithm (co-invented by Hinton) has had a tremendous impact on many different sciences and technologies. This is concerned with neural networks, a model of computing that mimics the human brain's structure and function to process data. Backpropagation allows scientists to "train" enormous neural networks. While the Nobel committee did its best to connect this influential algorithm to physics, it's fair to say that the link is not a direct one.

Training a machine-learning system involves exposing it to vast amounts of data, often from the internet. Hinton's advance ultimately enabled the training of systems such as GPT (the technology behind ChatGPT), and the AI algorithms AlphaGo and AlphaFold, developed by Google DeepMind. So, backpropagation's impact has been enormous.



In the future, it is possible that machines will take the place of scientists, and AI tools could win the main Nobel Prize, with humans needing their own category ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

DeepMind's AlphaFold 2 solved a 50-year-old problem: predicting the complex structures of proteins from their molecular building blocks, amino acids.

Every two years, since 1994, scientists have been holding a contest to find the best ways to predict protein structures and shapes from the sequences of their amino acids. The competition is called Critical Assessment of Structure Prediction (CASP).

For the past few contests, CASP winners have used some version of DeepMind's AlphaFold. There is, therefore, a direct line to be drawn from Hinton's backpropagation to Google DeepMind's AlphaFold 2 breakthrough. Baker used a computer program called Rosetta to achieve the difficult feat of building new kinds of proteins. Both Baker's and DeepMind's approaches hold enormous potential for future applications. Attributing credit has always been controversial aspect of the Nobel prizes. A maximum of three researchers can share a Nobel. But big advances in science are collaborative. Scientific papers may have 10, 20, 30 authors or more. More than one team might contribute to the discoveries honoured by the Nobel committee.

This year we may have further discussions about the attribution of the research on backpropagation algorithm, which has been claimed by various researchers, as well as for the general attribution of a discovery to a field like physics. We now have a new dimension to the attribution problem. It's increasingly unclear whether we will always be able to distinguish between the contributions of human scientists and those of their artificial collaborators – the AI tools that are already helping push forward the boundaries of our knowledge. In the future, could we see machines take the place of scientists and then the AI tool will get the main Nobel prize with humans needing their own category.

—Courtesy, The Conversation

PHOTO: X

Netanyahu condoles Ratan Tata's death

JERUSALEM, 13 OCT

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has condoled the death of Indian industry titan Ratan Tata, calling him a champion of the friendship between Israel and India. The former Tata Group chairman passed away on Wednesday evening aged 86. In a post on X addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Netanyahu highlighted Ratan Tata's contributions to fostering Israel-India ties. "To my friend, Prime Minister @narendramodi. I and many in Israel mourn the loss of Ratan Naval Tata, a proud son of India and a champion of the friendship between our two countries," he said on Saturday. "In sympathy, Benjamin Netanyahu," he said. *—PTI*

WWII bomb defused in Hamburg district

HAMBURG, 13 OCT

Several thousand people were forced to leave their homes in Hamburg's trendy Sternschanze district after the World War II-era bomb was discovered. According to dpa, more than 5,000 people were evacuated to safety from the 300-metre (984-foot) exclusion zone, fire officials said. Police also cleared restaurants and bars in the area. The bomb was found during construction work on the grounds of a primary school. According to a final statement from the fire department, the defusing itself took only about 30 minutes and went without complications. Shortly after midnight local time (2200 GMT Saturday), the fire department, which had been called in for a major operation, said on social media that the bomb had been defused. *—ANI*

Former 1st minister of Scotland Alex Salmond dies

LONDON, 13 OCT

Alex Salmond, the former first minister of Scotland who for decades championed Scotland's independence from the UK, has died. He was 69. Salmond, who was a divisive figure in British politics, died in North Macedonia after delivering a speech, according to British media. Tributes poured in from across the political spectrum, with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer calling him a "monumental figure" of both Scottish and British politics. "He leaves behind a lasting legacy," Starmer said. "As first minister of Scotland, he cared deeply about Scotland's heritage, history and culture, as well as the communities he represented." Salmond served as first minister of Scotland from 2007 to 2014, and was leader of the Scottish National Party on two occasions, from 1990 to 2000, and from 2004 to 2014. *—PTI*

1 dead, 9 hurt in gunfire after an event at US Varsity

NASHVILLE, 13 OCT

Gunfire broke out among a crowd near a Tennessee university Saturday afternoon, killing a 24-year-old man and wounding nine people, police said. A crowd that gathered earlier in the day for homecoming events at Tennessee State University was beginning to thin out when the gunfire erupted between two groups around 5 pm, said Metro Nashville Police spokesperson Don Aaron. Shell casings indicate that gunfire was exchanged across a street near campus between the groups, he said. Metro Nashville Police Commander Anthony McClain said the gunfire didn't appear to be directly related to Tennessee State University events that had included a parade and other festivities earlier in the day. The football game was taking place in another part of town when the gunfire happened. "We have to come to a point to stop this violence." *—PTI*

Israeli strike on N Gaza refugee camp kills 22

US may send THAAD missiles to Israel; Another Israeli strike on Central Gaza kills 8

GAZA, 13 OCT

At least 22 people, including women and children, have been killed in an Israeli attack on the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza as Israeli forces press on with their ground assault in the area.

As the death toll mounted on Saturday, the Israeli military issued evacuation orders for northern Gaza with instructions for residents near Jabalia to evacuate to the south of the enclave.

The Israel military launched a deadly offensive in the Jabalia area a week ago which it claims is aimed at stopping Palestinian group Hamas from regrouping. The attacks have trapped thousands of Palestinian civilians, international charity Doctors Without Borders, known by its French initials MSF, said.

Hamas on Saturday slammed the Israeli army and said its "massacres are a continuation of the ongoing criminal genocide against our people, shielded by American support". The attack that wounded more than 90 people was an attempt to "punish the population for their resilience and rejection of displacement", the group said in a statement.

The World Food Programme said this war will have "a disastrous impact on food security for thousands of Palestinian families" *PHOTO: PTI*

Palestinian news agency Wafa reported on Saturday that Israeli fighter jets bombed a multistorey apartment block in Jabalia on Friday night, hitting four inhabited homes and killing 22 people.

An Israeli strike on the central Gaza Strip killed a family of eight, Palestinian medical officials said Sunday, as Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants in the territory's north and airstrikes destroyed a century-old market in southern Lebanon.

Hamas delayed 7 Oct attack to enlist Iran, Hezbollah

The devastating terror onslaught carried out by Hamas in southern Israel on 7 October, 2023, had originally been planned for the previous year, but was delayed amid efforts by the Palestinian terror group to enlist the help of Iran and Hezbollah, according to a series of documents obtained by international media outlets on Saturday.

The reports cited minutes from a series of meetings held by Hamas's military and political leaders over the course of two years, in which they planned the logistics of the attack, as well as various correspondences between Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and Iranian officials.

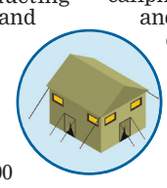
The World Food Programme warned that the escalating violence in northern Gaza was "having a disastrous impact on food security for thousands of Palestinian families".

—Al Jazeera with Agencies

US strikes target multiple militant camps in Syria

BEIRUT, 13 OCT

A series of US airstrikes targeted several camps run by the Islamic State group in Syria in an operation the US military said will disrupt the extremists from conducting attacks in the region and beyond.



The US Central Command said the airstrikes were conducted Friday, without specifying in which parts of Syria. About 900 US troops have been deployed in eastern Syria alongside the US-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces that were instrumental in the fight against IS militants.

Despite their defeat, attacks by IS sleeper cells in Iraq and Syria have been on the rise over the past years, with scores of people killed or wounded.

The Islamic State group seized territory at the height of its power and declared a caliphate in large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014, but was defeated in Iraq in 2017.

In March 2019, the extremists lost the last sliver of land they once controlled in eastern Syria.

It said battle damage assessments were underway and there were no civilian casualties. Last month, Iraq's military said that Iraqi forces and American troops killed a senior IS commander who was wanted by the United States, as well as several other prominent militants. *—PTI*

MANY DETAINED

Officials raid venues in Kiev as Ukraine needs fresh recruits

KYIV, 13 OCT

Ukrainian military recruitment officers raided restaurants, bars and a concert hall in Kyiv, checking military registration documents and detaining men who were not in compliance, media and witnesses reported Saturday.

Officers descended on Kyiv's Palace of Sports venue after a concert Friday night by Ukrainian rock band Okean Elzy. Video footage aired by local media outlets appears to show officers stationed outside the doors of the concert hall intercepting men as they exit. In the footage, officers appear to be forcibly detaining some men.

Checks were also conducted at Goodwine, an upscale shopping center, and Avalon, a popular restaurant. It is unusual for such raids to take place in the capital, and reflects Ukraine's dire need for fresh recruits. All Ukrainian men aged 25-60 are eligible for conscription, and men aged 18-60 are not allowed to leave the country.

A 27-year-old man said he left the concert as the last song was playing after he was told about the recruitment officers. He said he saw soldiers and police talking to people but "didn't see anything super aggressive."

PHOTO: X@EURONEWS

He said men felt in danger of being drafted whenever they ventured outside. He said his university draft waiver was taken away after Ukraine passed laws in April that both lowered draft-eligible age for men from 27 to 25 and did away with some draft exemptions.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military said on Saturday that it struck a Russian-controlled oil terminal in the partially occupied Luhansk region that provides fuel for Russia's war effort. Both sides are facing the issue of how to sustain their costly war of attrition — a conflict that started with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and that shows no signs of a resolution. *—PTI*

MACAO PICKED AS CHINA'S CASINO HUB LEADER

MACAO, 13 OCT

Macao's former top judge, Sam Hou Fai, was chosen as the Chinese casino hub's next leader in a largely ceremonial election on Sunday, setting him up to become the city's first chief executive born in mainland China.

Almost the entire election committee stacked with Beijing loyalists — 394 of 398 — voted for Sam, the sole candidate, in a departure from the long-standing custom of having chief executives who were born in the former Portuguese colony, typically from influential business families.

The remaining four were blank votes. The shift in the city's leadership to someone from the legal profession is likely to create expectations of a declining influence from business circles, which critics have often accused of colluding with officials, analysts say. They anticipate Beijing's policy agenda for the city will take priority. During the nomination period, he had already secured endorsements from 386 election committee members who voted in batches in a conference hall on Sunday. *—PTI*

Sam Hou Fai *PHOTO: PTI*

Over 100 children die due to diphtheria in Pakistan

KARACHI, 13 OCT

Over 100 children have died in Pakistan's Karachi from diphtheria this year due to the unavailability of Diphtheria Anti-Toxin, despite the disease being preventable through vaccination, Geo News reported.

According to Sindh's health officials, last year 140 cases were received by Sindh Infectious Diseases Hospital and 52 of them could not survive.

Meanwhile, experts of infectious diseases said the antitoxin medicine used against the disease was not available across Sindh, including Karachi.

They said antitoxin worth Pakistani Rupees 0.25 million was used for treating one child, Geo News reported.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Director Expanded Programme on Immunisation Muhammad Arif Khan had said last year that diphtheria was a life-threatening disease and timely vaccination was the sole way to prevent fatal ailment and its outbreaks in the community. *—ANI*

PHOTO: NEWS.ERR.EE

Pak secures $10M for climate action

Islamabad, 13 Oct

Pakistan has secured USD 10 million in climate finance funding to enhance integrated and adaptive water resource management in the Indus River, with focus on nature-based solutions. The funding was approved by the Adaptation Fund Board for the project called Sustainable Actions for Ecosystems Restoration in Pakistan. With 90 per cent of people sited in the Indus Basin, climate-driven alterations to the river's flow are set to seriously impact Pakistan's economy and ecology. *—PTI*

Clash erupts between tribes in Pak

KURRAM, 13 OCT

Clashes between rival tribes killed at least 11 people in the Kurram district in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said on Saturday. At least eight people were injured in the incident. Tensions rose in Kurram district after two people were critically injured in a shooting incident. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the shooting. It was also not clear if this deadly clash, like some previous unrest in the area, was fuelled by sectarian differences between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. The incident occurred in the Kunj Alizai area near the country's border with Afghanistan *—Courtesy, DW News*

SpaceX launches its mega Starship rocket

BOCA CHICA, 13 OCT

SpaceX launched its enormous Starship rocket on Sunday on its boldest test flight yet, striving to catch the returning booster back at the pad with mechanical arms.

Towering almost 400 feet, the empty Starship blasted off at sunrise from the southern tip of Texas near the Mexican border. It arced over the Gulf of Mexico like the four Starships before it that ended up being destroyed, either soon after liftoff or while ditching into the sea. The last one in June was the most successful yet, completing its flight without exploding.

This time, SpaceX founder and CEO Elon Musk upped the challenge and risk. The company aimed to bring the first-stage booster back to land at the pad from which it had soared several minutes earlier. The launch tower sported monstrous metal arms, dubbed chopsticks, ready to catch the descending 232-foot (71-metre) booster.

It was up to the flight director to decide, real time with a manual control, whether to attempt the landing. SpaceX said both the booster and launch tower had to be in good, stable condition. Otherwise, it was going to end up in the gulf like the previous ones.

Once free of the booster, the retro-looking stainless steel spacecraft on top was going to continue around the world, targeting a controlled splashdown in the Indian Ocean. The June flight came up short at the end after pieces came off. SpaceX upgraded the software and reworked the heat shield, improving the thermal tiles.

SpaceX has been recovering the first-stage boosters of its smaller Falcon 9 rockets for nine years, after delivering satellites and crews to orbit from Florida or California. But they land on floating ocean platforms or on concrete slabs several miles from their launch pads — not on them.

PHOTO: X/@ELONMUSK

Recycling Falcon boosters has sped up the launch rate and saved SpaceX millions. Musk intends to do the same for Starship, the biggest and most powerful rocket ever built with 33 methane-fuel engines on the booster alone. NASA has ordered two Starships to land astronauts on the moon later this decade. SpaceX intends to use Starship to send people and supplies to the moon and, eventually Mars. *—PTI*

POLLS OPEN AS CENTRE-LEFT EYES WIN IN LITHUANIA

VILNIUS, 13 OCT

Lithuanians headed to polls on Sunday to vote in the first round of the general elections, which are expected to see a change in government.

The ruling center-right Homeland Union could be replaced by a centre-left coalition of the opposition Social Democrats and several smaller parties, opinion polls suggested. About 2.4 million people are eligible to cast ballots.

The two rounds of voting will see 141 members elected for a four-year term. If no candidate gets over 50% of the vote in a district, its top two candidates will face each other in a run-off on October 27.

A poll by Vilmorus suggested that the Social Democrats would get twice as many votes as the Homeland Union. However, no party was expected to secure more than 20% of the vote, forcing alliances. Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte's government has suffered a blow to popularity despite economic growth and low inflation.

Many citizens criticized Simonyte's strict Covid-19 pandemic measures and said the government did not help businesses during lockdown. Critics also say they did not have sufficient access to health care services. The ruling government has also been condemned for its handling of migrants arriving through Russian ally Belarus, with whom Lithuania shares a border. The Social Democrats have promised to address income inequality by taxing the wealthy and implementing welfare schemes.

—Courtesy, DW News

AHEAD OF PREZ POLL

Cyberattacks hit Trump-aligned group

PHOTO: FREEPIK

WASHINGTON DC, 13 OCT

America First Policy Institute (AFPI), one of the several groups helping to lay the groundwork for a future Donald Trump administration said its computer systems were breached, marking the second known instance that people supporting the former president have been the target of a cyberattack.

The America First Policy Institute discovered the breach last week. It would not say what materials were compromised.

"As the leading policy group in the America First movement, it is not surprising that hostile foreign actors would attempt to infiltrate our IT," Marc Lotter, the organization's chief communications officer, said in a statement. "The tactics, techniques, and procedures of the threat actor are similar to that of nation-state sponsored activities we have seen, allowing us to remediate and respond quickly."

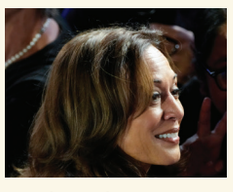
- The breach comes after authorities said Iranian hackers targeted Trump's campaign and email accounts of some supporters and stole some material

The breach comes after authorities said Iranian hackers targeted Trump's campaign and email accounts of some supporters and stole some material. Three Iranian operatives have been charged with the cyberattack.

The FBI declined to comment on the reported breach. *—PTI*

KAMALA RELEASES MEDICAL REPORT, CONTRASTING DONALD TRUMP

WASHINGTON DC, 13 OCT



Kamala Harris *PHOTO: PTI*

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris released a letter from her doctor that pronounced her in "excellent health" and fit for high office, in an effort to draw a contrast with her counterpart, Donald Trump. Physician Joshua Simmons said Harris's April exam was "unremarkable", noting her active lifestyle, "very healthy diet", seasonal allergies, sporadic hives, and moderate alcohol use.

Locked in a tight race, Harris's campaign hopes that contrasting her comparative youth and mental acuity with Trump's more advanced age and tendency to meander, along with the differences in transparency between the two, will help convince undecided voters that she is more fit for office than he is. Simmons said Harris's allergies had been well-managed with over-the-counter and prescription medications.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

Power Sec accounted for 49.9% of value in September 2024

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

September 2024 saw highest new investment in the power sector which accounted for about 50 per cent of the total value of investment during the month says a monthly investment report by Dolat Capital. Manufacturing sector comprises of 17.4 per cent of the total value of new investments, while others contributed to 10.3 per cent of the value. New Investments in the power sector skyrocketed on YoY basis to Rs 966.8 billion. Although the total new investments declined in Septmber by 12.5 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,937.5 billion. *—PTI*

PHOTO:PTI

Improve payment systems for disable people: RBI to banks

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued new guidelines aimed at improving the accessibility of digital payment systems for persons with disabilities (PwDs). With digital payment systems becoming increasingly popular among all segments of the population, including differently-abled individuals, the RBI's latest guidelines urge payment system participants (PSPs)--comprising banks and authorized non-bank payment providers--to review and modify their payment systems and devices to ensure ease of access for PwDs. This includes payment infrastructure such as Point-of-Sale (POS) machines, which should be user-friendly for persons with various disabilities. The guidelines emphasize adherence to the Accessibility Standards set forth by the Ministry of Finance. *—PTI*

Q2: Macrotech developers' net debt rises 14%

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Realty firm Macrotech Developers Ltd's net debt rose 14 per cent to Rs 4,920 crore during the second quarter of this fiscal year as it looks to invest more on land acquisition and construction. Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers, which sells its projects under the Lodha brand, is one of the leading developers in the country. According to its latest operational update, the company's net debt stood stood at Rs 4,920 crore as on September 30, 2024. "Our net debt is Rs 49.2 billion, well below our ceiling of 0.5 times net debt/equity," the company said. Macrotech Developers' net debt was Rs 4,320 crore as of June 30, 2024, and Rs 3,010 crore at the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year. *—PTI*

Kinetic Engineering to invest Rs 30 cr in subsidiaries

MUMBAI, 13 OCT

Kinetic Engineering Ltd will invest Rs 30 crore in its subsidiary Kinetic Watts and Volts as it looks to focus on expanding research, development, and manufacturing capabilities of the new venture, the company has said. Pune-based auto component maker Kinetic Energy had in 2022 announced the setting up a subsidiary company to manufacture electric vehicle components such as motors, axles, frames, controllers, and batteries. "Kinetic Engineering will invest Rs 30 crore into its newly formed electric subsidiary, Kinetic Watts and Volts Ltd. This strategic infusion builds upon the company's initial investment of Rs 18.5 crore, raising the total investment to Rs 48.5 crore," the company said. "With the latest infusion of capital into Kinetic Watts and Volts Ltd, we are not only reinforcing our commitment to innovation but also taking tangible steps towards a more sustainable future," said Kinetic Engineering Managing Director Ajinkya Firodia. *—PTI*

Mcap of 7 of 10 most valued firms erode by ₹1.22L crore

TCS' valuation tumbled to ₹15L Cr; Last week BSE fell 307 pts

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most valued firms eroded by Rs 1,22,107.11 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest laggards, in line with weak trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark fell 307.09 points, or 0.37 per cent, to 81,381.36. The market valuation of country's largest IT firm TCS tumbled Rs 35,638.16 crore to Rs 15,01,723.41 crore. The valuation of Reliance Industries slumped Rs 21,351.71 crore to Rs 18,55,366.53 crore.

ITC's valuation dropped Rs 18,761.4 crore to Rs 6,10,933.66 crore, while that of Hindustan Unilever Ltd's mcap was down Rs 16,047.71 crore to Rs 6,53,315.60 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) tanked Rs 13,946.62 crore to Rs 6,00,179.03 crore and that of ICICI Bank eroded Rs 11,363.35 crore to Rs 8,61,696.24 crore.

ITC's valuation dropped Rs 18,761.4 crore to Rs 6,10,933.66 crore **PHOTO: X**

Also, HDFC Bank's mcap declined Rs 4,998.16 crore to Rs 12,59,269.19 crore. However, Bharti Airtel added Rs 26,330.84 crore, taking its market valuation to Rs 9,60,435.16 crore.

The mcap of Infosys climbed Rs 6,913.33 crore to Rs 8,03,440.41 crore and that of State Bank of India was up Rs 3,034.36 crore to Rs 7,13,968.95 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most-valued domestic firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, ITC and LIC.

According to a report from Client Associates (CA), a leading multi-family office, the Indian stock market has remained largely unfazed by global geopolitical risks in recent years.

Both BSE Sensex and BSE 500 have delivered positive returns over the past five years, indicating a multi-year bull run, it said. Falling inflation rate gives the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) room to potentially reduce interest rates in the future, which would further stimulate the economy, the report added.

With regard to the recent Chinese stimulus package attracting global attention, Sarin said, any investment in China markets should be tactical rather than long-term, with clearly defined entry and exit strategies. *—PTI*

AMID WAR

FPIs take out ₹58,711 cr from equities in Oct

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Foreign investors turned net sellers in October, withdrawing shares worth Rs 58,711 crore in the month so far owing to escalating conflict between Israel and Iran, a sharp rise in crude oil prices, and the strong performance of the Chinese market.

The outflow came following a nine-month high investment of Rs 57,724 crore in September. Since June, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have consistently bought equities, after withdrawing Rs 34,252 crore in April-May.

Looking ahead, global factors such as geopolitical developments and the future direction of interest rates will play a crucial role in determining the flow of foreign investments into the Indian equity markets, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. FPIs made a net withdrawal of Rs 58,711 crore from equities between 1 and 11 October. "Escalating conflicts, particularly in the Middle East between Israel and Iran, have increased market uncertainty, leading to risk aversion among global investors. FPIs have become cautious and pulling out money from emerging markets," Vinit Bolinjkar, Head of research at Ventura Securities, said.

The geopolitical crisis has also led to a sharp rise in Brent crude oil prices from USD 69 per barrel on 10 Sep to USD 79 per barrel on 10 Oct, which poses inflationary risks and increases the fiscal burden for India, he added. Together, these developments have created a temporary barrier in Indian equities, reflected in FPI outflow in both debt and equity segments. *—PTI*

SBI to boost limit for MSME sector

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

To ensure easy and adequate credit availability to the MSME sector, the State Bank of India (SBI) is planning to enhance the threshold under the instant loan scheme from the existing Rs 5 crore.

'MSME Sahaj - End to End Digital Invoice Financing', provides solutions ranging from applying for the loan, documentation and disbursement of the sanctioned loan within 15 minutes, without any manual intervention.

"We have, last year, introduced a business rule engine based, data based assessment of the credit limits up to Rs 5 core. Anybody walking into our MSME branch has to give only their PAN and approval for sourcing GST data, we can give approval in 15-45 minutes," SBI Chairman CS Setty told.

Simplification of the MSME credit is something that the bank is emphasising on and making lending cash flow based backed by the CGTMSE guarantee, he said. This reduces the need for collateral,

PHOTO: PTI

which would enable a lot of people to come into the formal MSME borrowing system, he said.

"We still have a large number of MSME customers accessing the informal credit. We would like to bring them to the banking fold," he said.

As far as network expansion is concerned, Setty said SBI is planning to open 600 branches across the country in the current financial year.

SBI has a network of 22,542 branches across the country as of March 2024. "We have strong branch expansion plans... this would be mainly focused on emerging areas. A lot of residential colonies are not covered by us. Around 600 branches is something we are planning in the current year," he said. *—PTI*

CCPA ORDERS OLA TO OFFER REFUND CHOICES

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has directed ride-hailing platform Ola to implement consumer-friendly changes, including offering refund options and providing receipts for auto rides, the regulator said on Sunday.

The CCPA, led by Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare, observed that Ola's no-questions-asked refund policy only provided coupon codes for future rides, without giving consumers a choice for bank account refunds. "This (practice) violates consumer rights," the CCPA said in a statement. "The no-question-asked refund policy cannot mean that the company incentivises people to simply use this facility for taking another ride." The regulator also mandated Ola to issue bills or invoices for all auto rides booked through its platform, citing the absence of such documentation as an "unfair trade practice" under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. *—PTI*

MANUFACTURING ISSUES

Glenmark India arm recalls products in US

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Drug firm Glenmark is recalling two products in the US due to manufacturing issues, according to the US Food and Drug Administration.

New Jersey-based Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc, USA, a unit of Mumbai-based Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, is recalling 45,504 bottles of Ryaltris (olopatadine hydrochloride and mometasone fluorate) Nasal Spray.

The company is recalling the affected lot due to "defective delivery system", the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) said in its latest enforcement report. "The dip tube is clogged causing the spray not to work," it added.

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc, USA, initiated the nationwide Class II recall on September 24 this year. As per the USFDA, a Class II recall is initiated in a situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product may cause temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences or where the probability of serious adverse health consequences is remote.

The US health regulator said the drug firm is also recalling a generic medication to treat certain fungal skin infections. Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc, US, is recalling 11,568 tubes of Ciclopirox Gel, produced at the company's Goa-based plant, due to "defective container"," USFDA stated.

Firm received complaints of broken tubes at the seal, it added. The company initiated the Class III recall on 30 September.

As per the USFDA, a Class III recall is initiated in a "situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product is not likely to cause adverse health consequences". *—PTI*

Q2 results: Wipro to consider issuing bonus shares

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

IT firm Wipro on Sunday said its board of directors will consider the issue of bonus shares at a meeting scheduled to be held on 16-17 October, 2024.

Wipro is set to announce its Q2 FY25 results on 17 October, 2024. "The board of directors of the company will be considering a proposal for the issue of bonus shares, in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 (including the rules and regulations framed thereunder), the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018, at its meeting scheduled to be held over 16-17 October, 2024," a regulatory filing said.

The Bengaluru headquartered firm posted a 4.6 per cent year-on-year increase in its consolidated net profit in the June-ended quarter at Rs 3,003.2 crore. Wipro CEO and MD Srini Pallia had said that the firm is "confident" in its ability to execute better on bookings and profitable growth in Q2. *—PTI*

CIL's contribution to govt exchequer drops marginally

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

State-owned Coal India Ltd's contribution to the government exchequer dropped marginally by 0.6 per cent to Rs 28,930.27 crore in the first half of the ongoing fiscal over the year-ago period.

Coal India Ltd (CIL), which accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal output, paid Rs 29,122.13 crore to the government exchequer in April-September period of FY24, according to provisional figures of the coal ministry.

Total levies paid to the government in September also dropped by 11.1 per cent to Rs 4,335.24 crore from Rs 4,878.84 crore paid in the corresponding month of FY24. Of the total

PHOTO: PTI

Rs 28,930.27 crore paid to the government exchequer in April-September FY25, maximum amount of Rs 6,452.30 crore went to the Jharkhand government, followed by Rs 6,383.14 crore to the Odisha government, Rs 5,432.02 crore to Chhattisgarh, Rs 5,177.41 crore to Madhya Pradesh, and Rs 2,782.25 crore to Maharashtra, among others.

The coal-producing states earned the revenue from royalty, District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and National Mineral Exploration Trust, among others.

The government had earlier said that coal-producing states earned a revenue of Rs 1.52 lakh crore in the last nine years from royalty, DMF and NMET.

The coal mining sector has proved to be a big booster for the economic growth of the states that produce the fossil fuel.

The PSU's coal output in April-September period of the current fiscal year increased 2.5 per cent to 341.5 MT, over 332.9 MT in the year-ago period. *—PTI*

GOVT IMPOSES IMPORT CURBS ON PARTS OF POCKET LIGHTERS

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

The government on Sunday imposed import curbs on parts of pocket lighters with immediate effect, a move which would help encourage domestic manufacturing and cut dependence on their inbound shipments from China.

"Import of parts of pocket lighters, gas fuelled, non-refillable or refillable lighters (cigarette lighters)... is restricted with immediate effect," the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) said in a notification. Imports of cigarette lighters, priced less than Rs 20, are already prohibited. The import ban is also there on pocket lighters, gas-fuelled, non-refillable or refillable. Last year, the government also issued mandatory quality standard norms for flame-producing lighters with a view to contain import of sub-standard goods and boost domestic manufacturing.

PHOTO: PTI

Items under the quality control orders (QCO), cannot be produced, sold/traded, imported and stocked unless they bear the BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) mark. During April-July this fiscal, import of lighter parts stood at USD 3.8 million. It was USD 4.86 million in 2023-24. The parts are mainly imported from China.

Other sources of lighter imports include Spain, Turkey and the UAE. In September 2022, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin had urged the Centre to ban single use plastic cigarette lighters to help the domestic matchbox industry. These plastic cigarette lighters, which are legally and illegally imported from countries like China, are available for Rs 10 and can substitute 20 matchboxes. Further, these non-refillable lighters result in immense plastic waste, damaging the environment and also impacting health, he had said. *—PTI*

ANALYSTS SAY

Geopolitical events, corporate earnings, inflation data key factors to drive markets

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Quarterly earnings of corporates, trading activity of foreign investors and inflation data are the key factors that are expected to drive the momentum in the equity markets this week, analysts said.

Moreover, markets would also focus on movement in crude oil prices amid geopolitical tensions, experts added.

"In the coming week, the market's direction will largely hinge on corporate earnings, with major companies like Reliance Industries, Infosys, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, and HCL Technologies set to release their results, among others," Ajit Mishra, SVP,

PHOTO: PTI

- Moreover, markets would also focus on movement in crude oil prices amid geopolitical tensions, experts added

Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the macroeconomic front, investors will keep an eye on the CPI (consumer price index-based inflation) and WPI (wholesale price index-based) inflation data for September, scheduled to be announced on Monday.

Investors will also closely track updates on geopolitical tensions, particularly their impact on crude oil prices, and foreign fund flows. Key domestic economic data, including CPI and WPI inflation, are also scheduled for release, which could influence market sentiment, Mishra added. Last week, the BSE benchmark fell 307.09 points, or 0.37 per cent to close at 81,381.36, while NSE Nifty slipped 50.35 points or 0.20 per cent to settle at 24,964.25.

The week started on a downbeat note due to continued selling pressure from foreign investors, but selective strength in heavyweight stocks helped limit the losses in the later sessions, he said.

Hyundai Motor India's initial share sale is set to hit the markets on Tuesday and will conclude on Thursday, as the automaker plans to raise Rs 27,870 crore, through an offer for sale. The RBI policy was neutral, as the change in stance does not indicate the likelihood of a rate cut in the near term," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. *—PTI*

Avg airfares around Diwali drop 20-25% on many routes

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

Air passengers might have a reason to smile this Diwali season as average airfares on many domestic routes have dropped 20-25 per cent compared to the year-ago period, according to an analysis.

Increased capacity and the recent fall in oil prices are considered to be among the factors for the fall in air ticket prices. The analysis by travel portal ixigo showed that average airfare on the domestic routes have declined in the range of 20-25 per cent.

The prices are for one-way average fare on a 30 days APD (advanced purchase date) basis. For 2023, the time period considered is 10-16 November while it is 28 October- 3 November for this year. This is the time around Diwali.

The maximum decline of average airfare is 38 per cent for a Bengaluru-Kolkata flight to Rs 6,319 this year from Rs 10,195 last year, as per the analysis. The ticket price on Chennai-Kolkata route has fallen 36 per cent to Rs 5,604 from Rs 8,725.

The average airfare for Mumbai-Delhi flight has dropped 34 per cent to Rs 5,762 from Rs 8,788. Similarly, there is a 34 per cent decrease in ticket prices on Delhi-Udaipur route to Rs 7,469 from Rs 11,296. The decline is 32 per cent on Delhi-Kolkata, Hyderabad-Delhi, and Delhi-Srinagar routes. "Last year, airfares around Diwali had surged due to limited capacity, primarily driven by the suspension of Go First airline. However, this year we've seen some relief as additional capacity has been added since then, leading to a 20-25 per cent YoY dip in average airfares across key routes for the last week of October," ixigo Group CEO Aloke Bajpai said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Tendulkar to inspire young athletes

HOUSTON, 13 OCT

The legendary Sachin Tendulkar is set to inspire young athletes during his much-anticipated visit to Texas, where he will lead a special cricket clinic as part of the National Cricket League finals weekend. The clinic, to be hosted at the University of Texas at Dallas, aims to motivate aspiring cricketers and promote the sport at the grassroots level in the U.S. "Cricket has given me so much, and now it's my turn to give back," Tendulkar said ahead of the event slated for Sunday morning. "I'm excited to meet these young players and show them that with hard work and passion, anything is possible."—*PTI*

Himachal bundles out Uttarakhand for 299

DHARAMSALA, 13 OCT

Himachal Pradesh bundled out Uttarakhand for 299 to take a massive 364-run first-innings lead and enforced a follow-on on the visitors, targeting an outright victory in their Ranji Trophy Group B match, here on Sunday. Like the first two days, the third day also belonged to the home team that had put on board a massive 663 for six declared in their first essay in which four of their batters scored centuries. Resuming at 50 for one, Uttarakhand resisted through overnight batter Avneesh Sudha (95), who missed out on his century but helped his team concede a lesser lead.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Sharma misses cut in France, Svensson leads

PARIS, 13 OCT

Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma missed the cut at the Open de France with rounds of 72-75 at the Le Golf National, where he competed in the Olympic Games two months ago. After four birdies and five bogeys in his first round, Sharma had two birdies, three bogeys, and a triple bogey in his second round and missed the cut by a big margin as it fell at 1-under. Jesper Svensson took a stroke lead into the final round as he bid for a second DP World Tour title in his rookie season. The Swede, who won the Porsche Singapore Classic in March, carded a four-under 67 to sign for a 13-under-par total as he moved one clear of Sam Bairstow and Thorbjørn Olesen at Le Golf National.—*PTI*

Yuvraj finishes as top Indian at T-13 in Macau

TAIWAN, 13 OCT

Yuvraj Sandhu registered another fine result as the Indian finished in tied 13th place at the USD 1 million SJM Macao Open at Macau Golf and Country Club on Sunday. The Chandigarh pro played some fine golf over the weekend with rounds of 64-68 after rounds of 71-67 on the first two days. He totaled 10-under 270 to finish as the top Indian. Sandhu had three birdies against one bogey in yet another solid round. Last week Sandhu finished tied 4th at the Mercuries Masters and before that was tied 6th in the ADT. Among other Indians Ajeetesh Sandhu (71-67-70-66) was 6-under and finished T-29th, while Saptak Talwar (70-68-72-68) and Khalin Joshi (68-72-70-68) were both 2-under for the week and tied for T-42nd place. —*PTI*

Jannik Sinner shuts down Djokovic

He denies Djokovic 100th career title

SHANGHAI, 13 OCT

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner beat Novak Djokovic in straight sets to win the Shanghai Masters on Sunday, giving the Italian his tour-leading seventh title of the season.

The Italian bettered the 24-time Grand Slam champion 7-6 (4), 6-3 in an hour and 37 minutes and never faced a break point in the outdoor hard-court tournament. Sinner hit eight aces and 22 winners to four and 12, respectively, for Djokovic.

Djokovic was aiming for his 100th tour-level title and his fifth in Shanghai. Only Jimmy Connors with 109 titles and Roger Federer with 103 have hit the century mark in men's tennis.

Sinner became the first man to win more than six titles in a season since Andy Murray won nine in 2016. He also pulled level in his career record against Djokovic, now at four wins apiece.

"It was a very tough match playing against Novak is one of the toughest challenges we have," Sinner said. "It's tough to tell you a secret about (Djokovic) because he doesn't have any weaknesses. You have to try and use the small chances that he gives you, but there are not many during the match. He is a legend of our sport, he's very tough to play against, so I am very happy."

The victory for Sinner came after he lost the final of the China Open in Beijing to Carlos Alcaraz and amid an ongoing doping case. —*PTI*

Italy's Sinner is greeted by Serbia's Djokovic after Sinner won their men's singles final match at the Shanghai Masters PHOTO: X / @JANNIKSIN

ASIAN TT CHAMPIONSHIPS

India conclude campaign with 3 medals, make history

ASTANA, 13 OCT

India wrapped up their campaign at the Asian Table Tennis Championships with three medals, including a historic bronze in the women's doubles, after Ayhika Mukherjee and Sutirtha Mukherjee's dream run ended in the semifinals here on Sunday.

The world No. 15 pair, who stunned the reigning world champions from China en route to a bronze at the Asian Games last year, fell to Japan's Miwa Harimoto and Miyuu Kihara, 4-11 9-11 8-11 in under 30 minutes in their last-four clash. Before that, the Indian duo had defeated South Korea's Kim Nayeong and Lee Eunhye in the quarterfinals to secure India's first-ever women's doubles medal at the Asian meet.

The Indian women's team had earlier clinched a historic bronze in the team event.

The trio of Manika Batra, Ayhika Mukherjee, and Sutirtha Mukherjee secured the country's first-ever medal in the women's team category since the competition began in 1972, though they eventually lost 1-3 to Japan in the semifinals.

In the men's category, India secured another bronze, their third straight in the tournament, after the team of Achanta Sharath Kamal, Manav Thakkar, and Harmeet Desai fell 0-3 to Chinese Taipei in the semifinals.

In men's singles, Manav Thakkar and Manush Shah bowed out in the pre-quarterfinals.

World No. 60 Thakkar, who had earlier shocked world No. 14 Jang Woojin of South Korea, was defeated by Hong Kong's Baldwin Chan, 4-11 4-11 8-11.

Meanwhile, Manush put up a tough fight against Lin Yun-Ju of Chinese Taipei and took two games before narrowly losing 8-11 5-11 11-7 11-6 12-14. —*PTI*

Ayhika Mukherjee and Sutirtha Mukherjee win historic women's doubles bronze at Asian TT Championships PHOTO: X

AEF CUP

India clinch double podium, Iran tops

BENGALURU, 13 OCT

Indian riders Surya Aditya and Avik Bhatia secured the silver and bronze medals respectively while Iran's Yazdan Mollaafzal took the top spot at the AEF Cup CSIY-B held at Surge Stable here Sunday.

Surya, who had earlier secured the silver medal in Round 1 on Saturday, maintained his strong form to claim the overall silver in the competition. Meanwhile, 16-year-old Avik made an outstanding comeback after finishing eighth in Round 1 by grabbing silver in Round 2.

His impressive performance in Round 2 helped him secure the bronze in the overall standings.

Avik completed a clean jumping run in 86.43 seconds, which was faster than Iran's Yazdan Mollaafzal, but penalties incurred for touching obstacles during the jump-off affected his final placement.

On Day 2, Avik initially led the jumping event, but it was Yazdan Mollaafzal who ultimately claimed the gold medal with a flawless, penalty-free performance in the jump-off, clocking in at 60.32 seconds.

Cambodian rider Menglong Rinda completed the podium in Round 2, finishing the course in 79.58 seconds with 4 penalty points.

Out of the 12 riders who began the competition, 11 participated in Round 2, as Kuwait's Madhy A A H Alkhamis withdrew from the event. Riders from Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Chinese Taipei—Muhammad Khan Niazi, Taisiya Lokteva, and Asato Amami—were eliminated over the two days for not completing their respective rounds.

Hong Kong's Fabiola Chong and Thailand's Papungkorn Pabbamnam placed fifth and sixth, respectively, with Myanmar's Kyaw Wana Aung and Malaysia's Muhammad Nazirul Amsyar following closely behind in the overall rankings. —*PTI*

Surya Aditya and Yazdan Mollaafzal PHOTO: PTI

India set 152-run target to win

Group A match against defending champions Australia here on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

DUBAI, 13 OCT

India were set a target of 152 runs to win their women's T20 World Cup Group A match against defending champions Australia here on Sunday.

Opting to bat, Australia was restricted to 151 for 8 with opener Grace Harris top-scoring with 40 off 41 balls. Stand-in captains Tahlia McGrath and Ellyse Perry chipped in with 32 each.

For India, Renuka Singh and Deepti Sharma took two wickets apiece while Pooja Vastrakar, Radha Yadav, and Shreyanka Patil got one each.

India made one change, bringing back seamer Pooja Vastrakar in place of Sajeevan Sajana while Australia made two changes with Grace Harris and Darcie Brown coming back. —*PTI*

TODAY'S MATCH

NZ vs Pakistan

Time: 7.30 pm

ICC WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

England blew Scotland

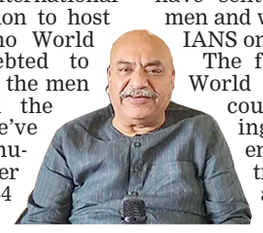
England have gone top of Group B with a game to play after demolishing Scotland by ten wickets in Sharjah. By chasing down a modest target of 110 with ten overs to spare, they overtook South Africa, who are also on six points but have played a game more, on net run rate. The manner of the victory, sealed with a boundary by Maia Bouchier, whose unbeaten 62 is now the tournament's highest individual score, also saw England boast an NRR higher than West Indies. They square off on Tuesday in what is a knockout encounter, though both teams could mathematically still go through together at the expense of South Africa. Danni Wyatt-Hodge also registered a half-century, 51* off 26. England 113 for 0 (Bouchier 62*, Wyatt-Hodge 51*) beat Scotland 109 for 6 (Kathryn Bryce 33, Ecclestone 2-13) by ten wickets. —*PTI*

India aims to take Kho Kho to Olympics and Asiad: Sudhanshu

NEW DELHI, 13 OCT

India is set to host the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup in 2025 and the event will not only be a spectacle but also act as the country's bid to take the sport to the Olympics and the Asian Games, said Kho Kho Federation president Sudhanshu Mittal.

"The excitement is at its peak. For us at the KKFI, to be allowed by the International Kho Kho Federation to host the first Kho Kho World Cup, we're indebted to them. It's both for the men and women and the kind of response we've received is monumental. It's a matter of pride that 54 countries are playing the sport. 34 countries have sent their entries for men and women," Mittal told IANS on Sunday.



The first-ever Kho Kho World Cup will see 24 countries participating after receiving entries from 34 countries for both men's and women's competitions. —*PTI*

Babar dropped for 2nd and 3rd Tests

LAHORE, 13 OCT

Former Pakistan captain Babar Azam was dropped on Sunday, while the pace duo Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah opted to withdraw from the remaining two Tests against England.

This is the first time that Babar has been "rested" from the red-ball side in his 54-Test career. "Taking into consideration the current form and fitness of key players and looking ahead to Pakistan's future assignments in the 2024-25 international cricket season, the selectors have decided to give rest to Babar Azam, Naseem Shah, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Shaheen Shah Afridi. "Abrar Ahmed (who is recovering from dengue fever) was unavailable for selection," a Pakistan Cricket Board statement read.

PHOTO: PCB

However, it is learned that Shaheen and Naseem withdrew themselves from the series on Sunday morning, citing niggles. "Both of them told the selectors they should be withdrawn from the two Tests," a PCB source told PTI.

"Perhaps these two had come to know they were going to be dropped so decided to withdraw themselves to save themselves from embarrassment," the source added.

Babar has struggled with poor form since early 2023, particularly in Test matches, where he has yet to score a half-century in his last 18 innings. Since the start of 2023, he has averaged just under 21 in nine Test matches, while Shaheen has also faced difficulties with form, being rested or dropped for the second Test against Bangladesh last month. —*PTI*

Tamburlini win third title, Diksha misses cut

TAOYUAN, 13 OCT

Swiss golfer Chiara Tamburlini fired a round of 69 (-3) to win the Wistron Ladies Open Taiwan by four strokes after India's Diksha Dagar missed the halfway cut at Sunrise Golf and Country Club on Sunday.

With rounds of 66-73-68-69, she totaled 12-under 276 and beat Yu-Sang Hou (68) of Taiwan by four shots.

Perrine Delacour of France (67) was third, Spain's Maria Hernandez (68) and Italy's Elena Virginia Carta (68) were tied for fourth place. Also tied for fourth with them were Nadaud of France and South African Nicole Garcia. Dagar missed the cut at the halfway mark. Both Tamburlini and Delacour are entered for the next event, the Hero Women's Indian Open, at the DLF Golf and Country. —*PTI*

Chiara Tamburlini PHOTO: @CHIARATAMBURLINI

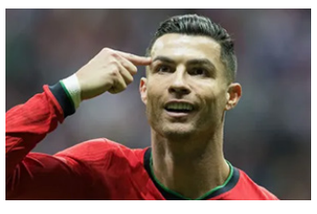
Cristiano Ronaldo scores in Portugal's NL win

LONDON, 13 OCT

Cristiano Ronaldo scored as Portugal beat Poland 3-1 for their third straight Nations League win on Saturday, while European champions Spain put an end to Denmark's perfect start in the competition. Bernardo Silva volleyed Portugal ahead in the 26th minute in Warsaw as Bruno Fernandes cleverly nodded a cross from Ruben Neves back towards the Manchester City midfielder. Ronaldo then found himself in the right place at the right time to turn in the rebound for Portugal's second after Rafael Leao's shot came back off the post following a brilliant surging run by the AC Milan winger.

The 39-year-old Ronaldo has now struck in all three games of this Nations League campaign for Portugal, taking his record men's international goals tally to 133.

Piotr Zielinski cut the deficit for Poland but Jan Bednarek's own goal sealed victory for Portugal, the lone remaining team in League A with a 100 percent record, and they could secure a place in the quarter-finals next week. —*AP*



Ronaldo PHOTO: @CRISTIANO

MAIDEN T20I HUNDRED

I've learned to cope with pressure: Samson

HYDERABAD, 13 OCT

Sanju Samson has learned to live with the inevitable "pressure and failures" in top-flight sport, and the Indian batter profusely thanked the leadership group for guiding him through dark phases of self-doubt, giving him another chance to prove his worth.

Samson, finally, managed to build a bridge between talent and productivity while smashing a sparkling maiden T20I hundred against Bangladesh here on Saturday, but the period preceding it was not a pleasant one for him.

Two successive ducks against Sri Lanka in July and two more tepid outings against Bangladesh over the past week here had left him creaking.

"After a couple of ducks in Sri Lanka, I was a bit doubtful about getting a chance in the next series. But they (coaching staff and captain) backed me and kept on saying that we will back you no matter what," said Samson in the post-match press meet.

Now, the 29-year-old accepts the fact he cannot walk away from the pockets of pressure as an Indian cricketer.

"I think mentally you go through a lot as an Indian cricketer, especially in this format (T20). But I have learned to cope with the pressure and the failures. I think a lot of credit has to go to the dressing room, the leadership group, and the captain and the coach have been backing me," he added.

Samson said head coach Gautam Gambhir had conveyed well in advance the decision to hand him the opener's role during the Bangladesh series. "I think three weeks before this series, I was very fortunate to get a message from the leadership group Gautam Bhai, Suryakumar (Yadav), and Abhishek Nair (assistant coach) that I will be opening. I think that gave me proper preparation. "I went back to Rajasthan Royals Academy and I was playing lots against new ball bowlers, and I think that preparation helped me a tiny bit. I think I was just coming in 10% more ready in this series than any other series," he detailed. —*PTI*